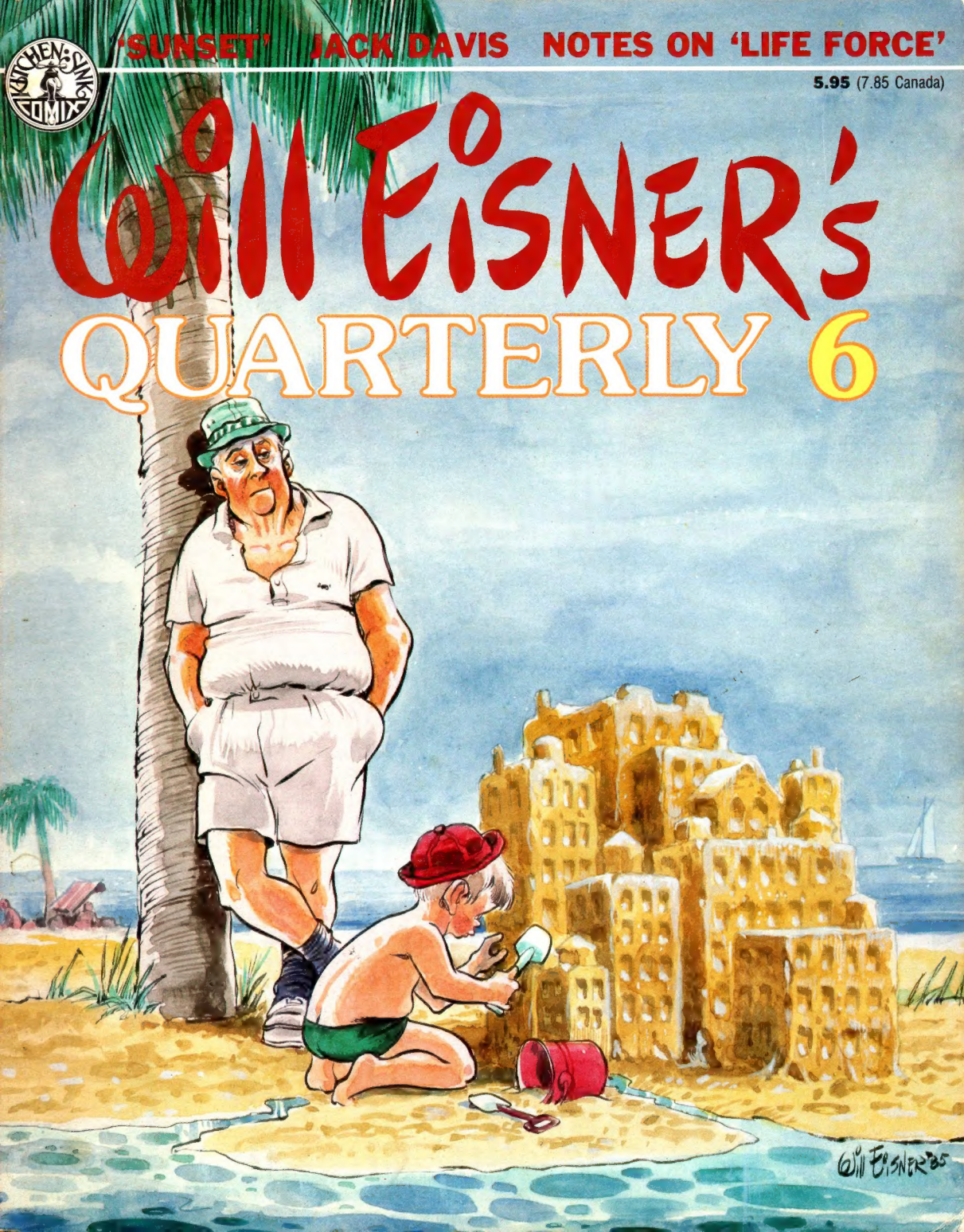
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No. 6 SEPTEMBER 1985

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QUARTERLY CHANGES FORMAT

Beginning with issue number 7, *Will Eisner's Quarterly* will become a 32-page black and white magazine carrying a $1.95 price tag.

We realize that this is a drastic change in format, but we feel we are taking a positive step in making Will Eisner's artwork more accessible to more readers.

We began to consider changing the *Quarterly* when Will Eisner told us that he would like to put "Shop Talk" on hiatus so that he could devote more time to his art.

While "Shop Talk" is a valuable feature—highlighting as it does a talk by Eisner with a top comics professional about the industry and philosophy—it is not what the *Quarterly* is all about. When Will said he wanted more time for his artwork, we had little difficulty agreeing to put "Shop Talk" on hiatus.

●

After some discussion, we then decided to make the *Quarterly* solely a vehicle for Eisner's art. The other standing feature of the publication, a pre-war *Spirit* section, added a significant cost to the package, so we decided to make this part of the *Quarterly* a separate entity. Plans are now underway to collect these pre-war *Spirits* in hardbound volumes. We'll be telling you more about that later in the Kitchen Sink *Pipeline*.

We felt that the *Quarterly* would best be served in a format similar to the Hernandez Brothers' *Love and Rockets*. Each magazine-sized issue will be printed on quality paper and will contain 28 to 30 pages of all new Eisner art. Eisner plans to write and draw self-contained works, with a story completed in each issue.

●

With the new price of $1.95, our subscription prices have also changed. A one-year domestic subscription is now $8, and foreign seamail subs are $10. Present subscribers will have their subscriptions adjusted to reflect the new price—three *Quarterlys* for the price of one.

●

The last deluxe number of *Will Eisner's Quarterly* is a strong, solid issue, featuring a 28 page complete story called "A Sunset in Sunshine City." Eisner's art reaches a new high in this poignant story about a retiree finding out that the "golden years" can also contain its share of problems and trouble.

There is also a "Shop Talk" with EC and *Mad* artist Jack Davis, who today concentrates on book and advertising illustrations. Harvey Kurtzman sits in on the talk with Eisner and Davis.

In "Notes from the Perimeter," Eisner talks about his graphic novel, *A Life Force*, which completed its serialization in *Quarterly* 5.

We've enjoyed bringing the deluxe edition of the *Quarterly* to you, and feel confident that you'll like its next incarnation. Thanks for your support, and we'll see you in December!

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A Sunset in Sunshine City

BY Will Eisner

... GOOD NEWS, HELEN! DADDY SOLD THE CAFETERIA! UH, HUH.. FINALLY HE AGREED TO RETIRE.. YES... TO SUNSHINE CITY... OH, YES, HE BOUGHT A CONDOMINIUM !!

YES ... HE'S BEEN SO IMPOSSIBLE SINCE MOTHER DIED, MOODY... LISTLESS ...WELL, LET'S FACE IT... YOU AND I ARE ALL THE FAMILY HE'S GOT LEFT...

LISTEN, HELEN, I'M GIVING HIM A GOING AWAY PARTY... OH, A FEW OF HIS OLD CRONIES.... NEXT FRIDAY... CAN YOU COME EAST FOR IT... GREAT! HE'D LOVE IT! ... SEE YOU THEN... 'BYE'

KLOP'S CAFETERIA

COMING SOON

THERE, NOW, 'BET YOU'RE GLAD YOU **SOLD** THIS PLACE, EH, EH, MR. **KLOP**? THE NEIGHBORHOOD SURE IS **CHANGED** FROM WHEN YOU STARTED OUT HERE, I BET!

Y'SURE BEEN HERE A LONG TIME ... 'KINDA FIXTURE ON THE BLOCK ... I USTA COME HERE WITH MY OL' MAN WHEN I WAS JUST A LITTLE KID!

OVER 30 YEARS IN THE SAME LOCATION. SINCE 1950 ... BEFORE THAT-UP IN THE BRONX.

HIYA, HENRY! CONGRATULATIONS! 'HEAR YOU SOLD OUT... ...'BET YOU GOT A BIG DOLLAR FROM THAT PIZZA CHAIN!

I DIDN'T DO BAD CONSIDERING THE LOCATION...THIS STREET DON'T HAVE THE KIND OF TRAFFIC IT USED TO!

CIGARS

KLUP'S

COMING SOON PIZZA FINE ITALIAN FOOD

SALE

WELL... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ALL YOUR MONEY, LIVE IT UP?

ARE YOU KIDDING, ARCHIE... I'M 70 YEARS OLD H-A-R-D-L-Y

I HEAR YER GOING TO RETIRE DOWN IN THE SUNBELT!

YES... MY DAUGHTERS, RITA AND HELEN, TALKED ME INTO IT... BUT I'M GOING TO MISS THIS PLACE... I REALLY DON'T WANT TO LEAVE HERE.

AAAH NOT ME!! I'D GET OUT OF HERE FIRST CHANCE I GOT!

I DON'T KNOW

C'MON HENRY, WHAT'VE YOU GOT HERE..?? A COUPLA OLD STOREKEEPERS AND A LOTTA STREET PUNKS !!

SURE, YER WIFE, REST HER SOUL, IS GONE AND YOUR KIDS IS ALL MARRIED, SO...??

RIGHT, SO WHAT'S THERE LEFT FOR YOU HERE ?

MEMORIES, LOTS OF MEMORIES!!

AFTER ALL, WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE PAST??... ONLY LAMP POSTS, FIRE HYDRANTS... A STREET, A SEWER, A BUILDING... THEY ARE MONUMENTS TO MY MEMORIES

SMILE MISS ESE KLOP

KLOPS CAFETERIA

GRAND OPENING

KLOPS CAF...

AAACH... WHO CAN SMILE WHEN A HUSBAND PUTS EVERY THING HE OWNS INTO A CAFETERIA

OH, WHERE CAN I GET ANOTHER JOB, HENRY... BEING A WAITRESS IS ALL I KNOW

DOREEN, BE SENSIBLE. I'M A MARRIED MAN... RUBY ALREADY SUSPECTS ABOUT US WE CAN'T LET IT GO ON... I DON'T WANT TO HURT HER! ... ITS THE BEST WAY, BELIEVE ME...

GET AN AMBULANCE! SOME HOOLIGAN KNOCKED OUT MR. KLOP... TOOK HIS STORE RECEIPTS. HE WAS ON THE WAY TO THE BANK!

LIE STILL, MR KLOP

MY WEDDING RING... OH MY GOD, HENRY... IT SLIPPED OFF MY FINGER AND DROPPED INTO THE SEWER

TAKE IT EASY, RUBY... NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT ...I'LL GET YOU ANOTHER RING ON OUR NEXT ANNIVERSARY

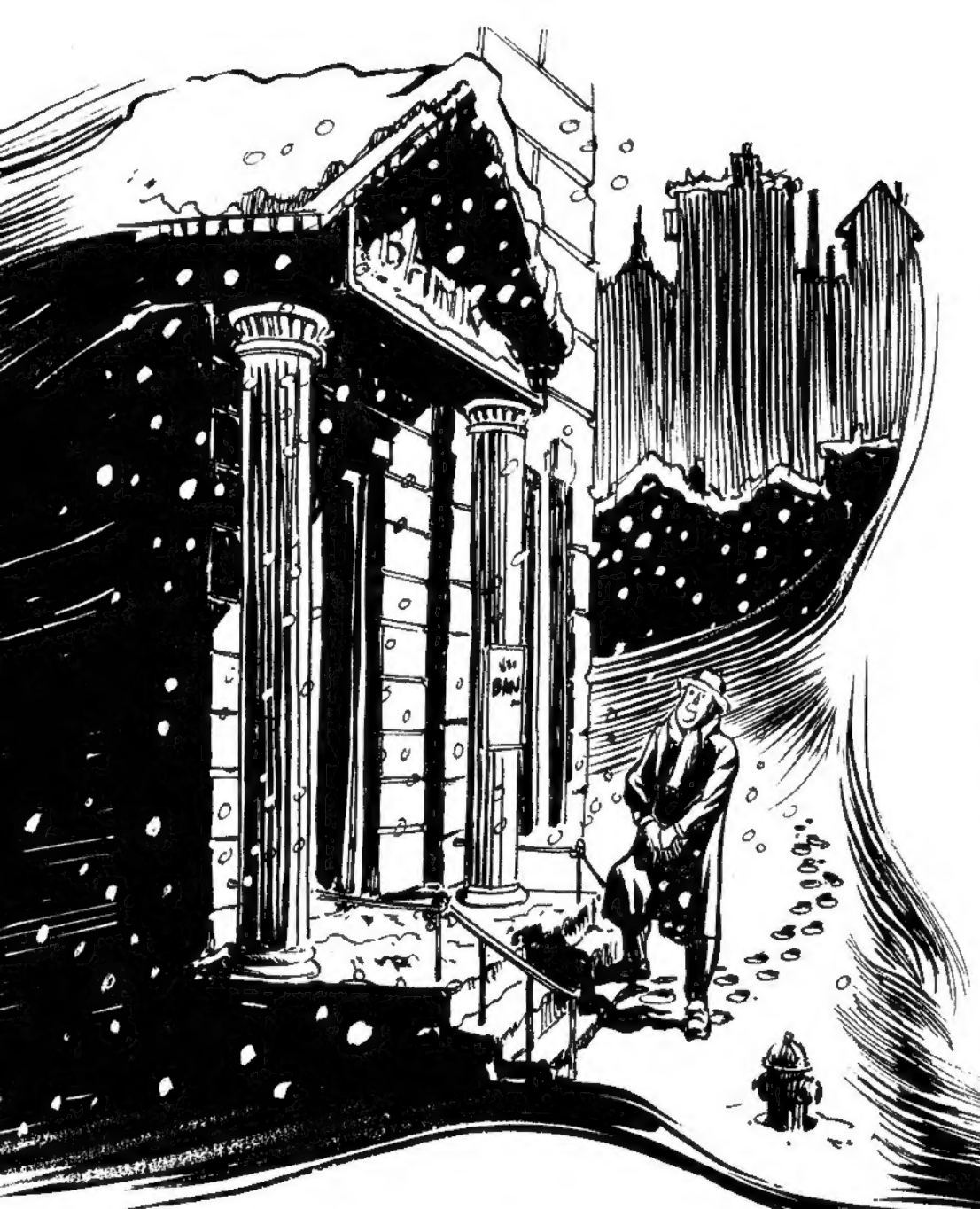
"OH DADDY, MY FLUFFY, MY FLUFFY!"

DON'T CRY, RITA... I'LL GET YOU ANOTHER DOG!

HOPE YOU GOT INSURANCE MR. KLOP... THIS FIRE AIN'T GONNA LEAVE MUCH OF YOUR CAFETERIA!

KLOPS CAFETERIA

HENRY, YOU'VE GOT TO TELL THE GIRLS NOT TO WAIT FOR YOU BY THE LAMPPOST... YOU COME HOME TOO LATE!



SO...I PAWNED MY WEDDING RING! NOW YOU CAN MAKE THE BANK PAYMENT. LISTEN HENRY, I KNOW HOW MUCH THAT STORE MEANS TO YOU. SO NEXT YEAR YOU CAN BUY ME ANOTHER RING.

CONGRATULATIONS MR. KLOP - YOU'VE PAID OFF THE LOAN...JUST TWO YEARS SINCE THE FIRE AND YOU'VE TRIPLED YOUR BUSINESS!...NOW, IF YOU WANT TO EXPAND...A CHAIN PERHAPS...THE BANK IS WILLING TO...

NO THANKS, I'M NOT READY YET! WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT A CHAIN OR A FRANCHISE OPERATION?

YES, JERRY... I KNOW YOU WANT TO MARRY MY RITA! ...MAY I ASK YOUR PROSPECTS?

WELL, MR KLOP...AH, DAD, RIGHT NOW I'M BETWEEN DEALS...NOW, WHEN YOU TAKE ME INTO YOUR BUSINESS WE CAN FRANCHISE THE CAFETERIA... ITS THE BIG THING NOW!

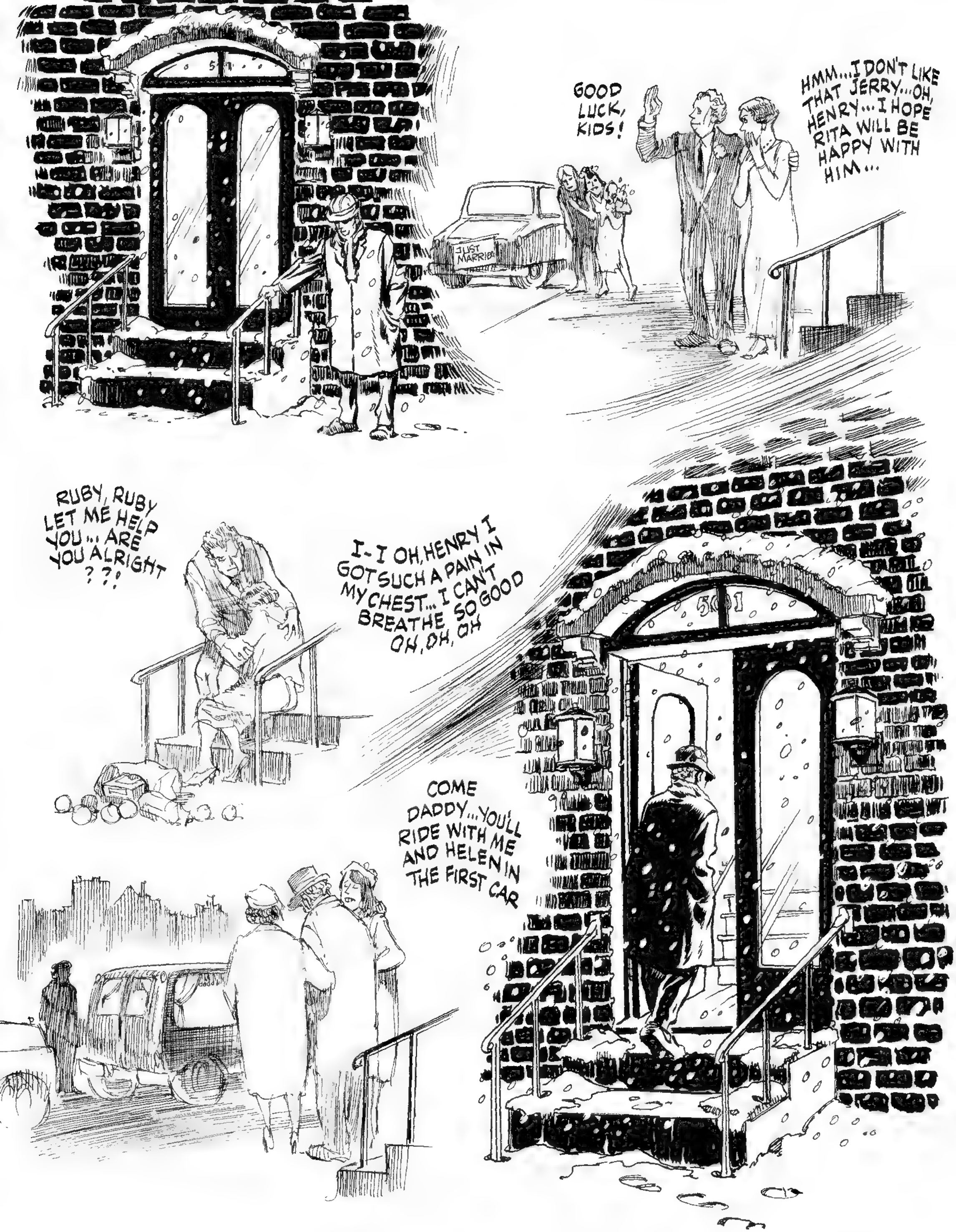
NO JERRY, I'M NOT READY FOR THAT... BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE A 'COUNTERMAN' MAYBE I CAN GIVE YOU A PLACE

ME?? MAKE SANDWICHES?! FOR-GET IT, DAD!

I'M WORRIED ABOUT THIS JERRY...RITA, RITA WHY CAN'T YOU FIND A NICE STEADY BOY LIKE YOUR SISTER DID?!

OH, DADDY... HELEN'S GEORGE IS A BORE...MY JERRY IS VERY EXCITING...HE HAS BIG DREAMS. YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND HIM!

I'M GOING TO MARRY JERRY AND THAT IS THAT.


GOOD LUCK, KIDS!
HMM...I DON'T LIKE THAT JERRY...OH, HENRY...I HOPE RITA WILL BE HAPPY WITH HIM...
JUST MARRIED
RUBY, RUBY LET ME HELP YOU... ARE YOU ALRIGHT ??!
I-I OH, HENRY I GOT SUCH A PAIN IN MY CHEST... I CAN'T BREATHE SO GOOD OH, OH, OH
COME DADDY... YOU'LL RIDE WITH ME AND HELEN IN THE FIRST CAR

... AND IN MIDTOWN THE SNOW THAT'S BEEN FALLING ON THE CITY SINCE EARLY THIS MORNING HAS TURNED TO SLUSH AS A RISE IN TEMPERATURE HAS BROUGHT RAIN WHICH IS ADDING TO THE TRAFFIC TIE-UP... IT'S A MESS, FOLKS! AND THAT WRAPS UP THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS REPORT...

.. STAY TUNED TO....

...AHH RUBY... HOW FAST IT'S ALL GONE BY ...SUDDENLY IT'S THE LAST CHAPTER,.... ALREADY I MISS YOU... EVEN YOUR NAGGING!!

... ALL OUR LIFE TOGETHER IT WAS.." HENRY DO THIS, HENRY DO THAT"...I CAN STILL HEAR YOUR VOICE IN THIS ROOM...

HEY, DADDY... EVERYBODY'S HERE FOR YOUR 'GOING AWAY' PARTY... COME ON!!

HEY, FOLKS, HERE HE IS!

OH, HELLO HELEN.

HI, DADDY

HEY, HEY, HENRY, TH' SUNSHINE KID!

LUCKY GUY, NO MORE OF SLUSH AND SNOW!

EASY JOE... Y'R BLOOD SUGAR Y'KNOW.

AAAH... JUST A TEENY TASTE... BOY, HENRY'S GIRLS SURE MAKE A GREAT FUDGE !!

WELL, JERRY... Y'R FATHER-IN-LAW IS **FINALLY** GOING TO HANG UP HIS KNIFE AND FORK, SO TO SPEAK!

IF HE'D OF LISTENED TO **ME** HE'D HAVE A CHAIN FRANCHISE BY NOW ... AAAH A SMALL -TIMER **ALL** HIS LIFE!

HA, HA. OH HELEN, HOWS ABOUT A DRINK FOR YOUR DAD?

OH... PLEASE NO. DADDY'S GOT A BAD LIVER DON'T PUSH LIQUOR ON HIM, LILLY.

HA, HA, HA, HENRY IS SO LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH GOOD DAUGHTERS!

JERRY!! PLEASE DON'T TALK LIKE THAT ABOUT DADDY TO HIS FRIENDS! ...WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

...EHHH. I GOT A BUSINESS APPOINTMENT UPTOWN... I CAN'T HANG AROUND - I'LL SEE YA LATER, RITA!

LISTEN, I'VE KNOWN HENRY FOR 30 YEARS... HE WORKED HARD FOR EVERY DIME HE'S GOT!

YEAH... 50 YEARS RUNNING A CAFETERIA WAS NO PICNIC.

WELL, HE GOT A DAMN GOOD PRICE FROM THEM PIZZA PEOPLE. THEY DIDN'T QUIBBLE!

AH, RITA, IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS - BUT IS YOUR JERRY ALWAYS LIKE THAT?

YOU DONT UNDERSTAND. Y'SEE HE'S INVOLVED IN BIG DEALS ... GOT A LOT ON HIS MIND ALL THE TIME!

I HOPE YOU GOT YOUR MONEY WELL INVESTED, HENRY

IF I KNOW HENRY IT'S ALL IN SMALL BILLS UNDER THE BED... EH, EH,?

WELL, I LIKE TO STAY LIQUID

CHEER UP, HENRY... YOU'RE A BACHELOR AGAIN... EH?

OH, SHUT UP, LARRY... CAN'T YOU SEE HE STILL MOURNS RUBY!!

DON'T LOOK SO DOWN IN THE MOUTH KIDDO... I ENVY YOU! .. GOLF... FISHING... OH, BOY, OH BOY, WHAT A LIFE.

A 'CONDO' DOWN IN SUNSHINE... HEY, WHAT CAN BE BAD ABOUT THAT, EH, HENRY?

WELL, I'LL MISS YOU GUYS.

WE GOTTA GO NOW... GREAT PARTY, HENRY!

LOTS OF LUCK

DON'T FORGET TO WRITE, HENRY!

AAAH... HE WONT HAVE TIME. HE'LL BE GOLFING!

JOE, JOE, A-N-O-T-H-E-R FUDGE??

AW, C'MON, MILLIE IT'S ONE FOR THE ROAD !!

GOOD PARTY, RITA... BOY, DID YOU SEE THEM EAT? WOW!!

WELL, YOU KNOW DAD'S FRIENDS! ...NOW, LET'S GET DAD'S PACKING DONE.

...I'M PUTTING MOMMA'S PICTURE IN WITH YOUR SHIRTS DAD... OKAY??

OKAY!

I'VE ORDERED GOLF CLUBS TO BE SENT DOWN TO HIM!

DAD, DID YOU HEAR THAT? HELEN IS SENDING YOU A SET OF GOLF CLUBS!

THANKS

V-E-R-Y CLASSY!! CAN YOU IMAGINE HIM IN **THIS** ??

OH, HE'LL ENJOY IT ONCE HE GETS DOWN THERE... **WON'T YOU, DAD?**

C'MON, DAD! CHEER UP, YOU SHOULD BE VERY **HAPPY!**

HAPPY? HAPPY? LIKE IN A MOVIE, I'M WALKING OFF INTO THE SUNSET. ...IT **LOOKS** A LOT BETTER THAN IT **FEELS!**

C'MON DAD... WE'LL MISS THE PLANE!

GOOD BYE, DAD... RITA! LET ME KNOW!

GOODBYE, HELEN, REGARDS TO GEORGE.

GEE, RITA, SO NICE OF YOU TO TAKE DADDY TO SUNSHINE AND SET HIM UP. I HOPE **YOUR JERRY** WONT MIND BEING LEFT UP HERE ALONE... **MY** GEORGE **HATES** IT WHEN I GO AWAY— EVEN OVERNIGHT!

NO... JERRY'S **SO** BUSY, HE WONT KNOW I'M GONE! LISTEN,... THANKS FOR COMING EAST TO HELP ME.

DON'T WORRY, HELEN! I'LL CALL REGULARLY AND KEEP YOU POSTED!

WELL, DAD, HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?? GREAT HUH?

UH HUH

IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL HERE... JUST BREATHE THE AIR, DAD!... NO MORE SLUSH AND SNOW. AHHHHHH...

IT'S NICE...

...AND FROM YOUR TERRACE YOU CAN SEE THE OCEAN.

AND THE NEIGHBORS, TOO!

HELLO... YOU JUST MOVED IN??

YES, HELLO, I'M RITA,... THIS IS MY FATHER, HENRY KLOP!

I'M OLGA LONGO, LIKEWISE, I'M SURE.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

MY FATHER IS A WIDOWER, MISS LONGO--I HOPE HE WON'T BE LONELY HERE.

WELL, I'M A WIDOW... I'M SURE HE WON'T BE ALONE.

YOO HOO♪, MR KLOP... IT'S ME, **OLGA LONGO**... 'HOPE YOU DON'T MIND, I SIGNED US UP...WE'RE PARTNERS IN THE TOURNAMENT!

OKAY, SURE.

HENRY.. YOU WON!! **BINGO**!! BINGO HERE!

THANKS OLGA!

TOILET ARTICLES 4

OH, HELLO, HENRY, CAN I HELP YOU SHOP??

OH, HELLO, OLGA

MY LATE HUSBAND, TONY, ALWAYS BOUGHT TOO MUCH IN THE SUPERMARKET. HA, HA,... MEN ALWAYS BUY TOO MUCH!

ACTUALLY, I USED TO BE IN THE CAFETERIA BUSINESS. I KNOW HOW TO BUDGET FOOD.

REALLY?? HOW FASCINATING. WELL, HA HA HA MAYBE YOU CAN TEACH **ME** A FEW TRICKS.

...GLAD TO.

OH, WHAT A COINCIDENCE... WE'RE SEEING THE **SAME** MOVIE! 'MIND IF I SIT NEXT TO YOU, HENRY??

RHUMBA CLASS TODAY ★ DANCE FOR ADULT

BASICALLY, HENRY, YOU'RE A VERY GOOD DANCER.

I USED TO BE WHEN I WAS YOUNG!

OH, OLGA,, IT'S **YOU**? COME IN, COME IN!

OH, EXCUSE ME HENRY... ER, I BROUGHT YOU SOME CAKE... I MADE **TOO MUCH**! ...GOT TO WATCH MY FIGURE, Y'KNOW.

15

HELLO DAD... WELL, HOW'S IT GOING DOWN THERE ??

GOOD!! YOU LEARNED TO PLAY GOLF? FINE, FINE

HAVE YOU MADE ANY NEW FRIENDS YET? OH, REALLY, MISS LONGO? I REMEMBER HER, SHE'S NEXT DOOR... THAT'S NICE...SO, WHAT ELSE...

SORRY, JERRY... THAT'S THE DEAL...TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT!

BUT, CHARLIE, MY WIFE WILL INHERIT...

JERRY, JERRY, YOU'RE NOT DEALING WITH KIDS, HERE...SIGH: OKAY...I'LL TAKE A LONG TERM NOTE..WITH THE INHERITANCE AS COLLATERAL!

SURE, PLEASE, PLEASE, I WANT IN ON THE DEAL

AW F'CRISSAKES STOP SLOBBERIN'...EITHER YOU AND YOUR WIFE PLEDGE THE INHERITANCE OR YOU ARE O-U-T! NOW, BEAT IT...I'M A BUSY MAN!!

KEEP IN TOUCH, JERRY

RITA!! IT'S ME, JERRY. OPEN UP!

GOTTA HANG UP NOW, DAD... JERRY'S COME HOME...'BYE, TAKE CARE

JERRY!? WHAT'S WRONG ?

16

WHAT HAPPENED, JERRY ?

...MY REAL ESTATE DEAL... IT'S GOING DOWN THE DRAIN **UNLESS** WE SIGN A NOTE! OTHERWISE.... CHARLIE WILL CUT ME OUT!!

OH, MY GOD!! YOU HOOKED UP WITH THAT CROOK AGAIN ?

I **DON'T NEED** A LECTURE NOW!

I NEED BIG MONEY TO BACK UP A NOTE... LIKE, PLEDGE YR INHERITANCE!

... AND ALL OUR MONEY WE PUT IN SO FAR... THE DEVELOPMENT MONEY?

THAT WAS SEED MONEY... Y'CAN KISS THAT **GOODBYE** IF I'M CUT OUT!

I DON'T GET IT?

...SIMPLE, TO PROTECT MY EQUITY I GIVE HIM A NOTE BACKED BY COLLATERAL.. NOW, YOU'LL BE LEFT OVER $200,000 WHEN HE DIES... WE CAN PLEDGE THAT.

JERRY, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ?!

LISTEN, RITA, IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE ...HE'S DOING ME A FAVOR !

IT'S KIND OF **SLEAZY**, WAITING FOR MY FATHER TO **DIE** SO I CAN GET HIS

:UGH:

AHCHOO

HERE, HENRY, TAKE A SPOONFUL OF THIS... IT'LL DO WONDERS FOR YOU...

THANK YOU OLGA :COUGH: IMAGINE GETTING A COLD IN THIS CLIMATE.

YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. YOU NEED SOMEONE TO LOOK AFTER YOU.

SO NICE OF YOU TO BE SO VERY ATTENTIVE, OLGA!

WHY NOT, HENRY,... YOU'RE A VERY NICE PERSON.

... AND PEOPLE NEED EACH OTHER!

WELL, IN ALL THE YEARS I WAS MARRIED, I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I DEPENDED ON MY WIFE.

... OH, I CAN UNDERSTAND IT... MY TONY, REST HIS SOUL, NEEDED ATTENTION ALL HIS LIFE.

HEY... NO ONE IS DRIVING THAT CAR!!

LOOK OUT!!

OOPS!

OH, HAHAHA YES THERE IS... JUST A LITTLE OLD LADY WHO CAN'T SEE OVER THE DASHBOARD.

OH... SO, WHAT WERE WE SAYING?!

BAKERY

ABOUT PEOPLE NEEDING EACH OTHER.

YES... SO, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF MARRYING AGAIN??

AH, YES...

WHO? YOU GOT SOMEBODY IN MIND?

YES, YOU!!

...I'LL GET IT, CHARLIE... I'LL GET IT SOON... NO SWEAT!!

JERRY, I GOT A LETTER FROM DAD!

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH, GOODBYE, CHARLIE !!

WHAT'S Y'R FATHER SAY?

HE'S GOING TO GET MARRIED AGAIN !

DAMN DAMN !!

WHAT'S SO TERRIBLE, JERRY?

-HE GETS MARRIED-AND THERE GOES THE **INHERITANCE**... I MEAN, WHEN HE **DIES**, HIS **NEW WIFE** GETS A **BIG** CHUNK OF THE MONEY... LEAVING DAMN LITTLE FOR **US**!

DEPENDS ON THE WILL.

WHO Y' CALLING, RITA?

MY SISTER! HELLO...HELLO, HELEN, DID YOU HEAR?? OH, YOU **ALREADY KNOW** ABOUT IT!

OF COURSE IT'S A LITTLE RIDICULOUS AT HIS AGE! UH HUH, UH HUH, UH HUH...

WHAT'S SHE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT??

...SHE SAYS WE SHOULD GO DOWN TO SEE HIM... **TALK HIM OUT OF IT!**

YEAH, GOOD IDEA!

OKAY, HELEN, WE'RE GOING DOWN TO SUNSHINE!

YEAH, LIKE, RIGHT NOW!!

BUT... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, RITA! I NEED SOMEONE.

DOWN HERE, I'M IN A KIND OF A LIMBO... WAITING, PASSING TIME.

DO YOU THINK ONE RETIRES JUST LIKE THAT? ... LIKE SITTING DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF A RACE??

BUT, WHAT ABOUT ALL YOUR ACTIVITIES ...GOLF, FISHING, ALL THE PEOPLE YOUR OWN AGE?

MY OWN AGE?? WHO NEEDS THEM... I'M ONLY 70... I DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS **OLD**... I DON'T **FEEL** OLD! OLD IS WHEN Y'GOT NO FUTURE!

WHAT I WANT IS A **FUTURE**!

BUT DADDY, WHAT'S WRONG WITH SECURITY, **ENJOYING** LIVING FROM DAY-TO-DAY?

HAH... IF Y'R TERMINALLY SICK YOU LIVE FROM DAY TO DAY! IF YOU DONT KNOW WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO DIE-YOU LIVE FOR TOMORROW.

LIVING FOR TOMORROW HAS BEEN MY LIFE... ALWAYS DREAMS, RITA... **DREAMS**! EACH HILL I CLIMBED WAS ONLY TO FIND ANOTHER! YOU UNDERSTAND??

FIRST, IF WAS MY OWN CAFETERIA, THEN IT WAS A WOMAN... A FAMILY... THEN IT WAS A BIGGER CAFETERIA MAYBE...

NOW... IT'S OLGA! A STRONG YOUNG LADY! WITH **HER** I CAN KEEP ON CLIMBING HILLS... MAYBE START UP A **NEW** CAFETERIA... I HAVE MONEY NOW.

BUT WHAT ABOUT **US** CHILDREN ?

WHAT DO I OWE YOU? I GAVE YOU AND YOUR SISTER A START...I DID MY DUTY, NOW YOU'RE BOTH WELL MARRIED... YOU DON'T NEED MY MONEY!

WELL, RITA, WHAT DID HE SAY... CAN HE CHANGE HIS WILL SO OLGA WON'T GET HIS MONEY IF HE DIES?

HE'S NOT PLANNING ON DYING. HE WANTS TO GET MARRIED, JERRY!

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN **HIM**...WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY... **OUR** MONEY ??

YOU MEAN **MY** MONEY. I CAN'T FORCE HIM!

YOU'RE NOT **COOPERATING**, RITA! DON'T YOU SEE IT'S **MY BIG DREAM DEAL** THAT'S **RIDING ON** THAT INHERITANCE !!!

FRANKLY, YOU GOTTA LOOK AFTER YOURSELF. **DAMMIT, TELL HIM OFF! IT'S MY LIFE!**

BUT JERRY, WHAT ABOUT **HIS** LIFE ?

SHIT...HE'S 70 YEARS OLD... HE CAN **DROP DEAD** ANY TIME NOW!

WELL??

IT STINKS, JERRY!

LISTEN, RITA, I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU COLD... **YOUR** INHERITANCE IS WHAT'S KEEPING **ME** HERE, ... GET IT!

SO, **THAT'S** WHAT OUR MARRIAGE IS ALL ABOUT ?

LOOK AT IT THIS WAY, BABY...IT'S **BETTER** THAN **NO** MARRIAGE AT ALL!

21

-'GULP!-
WELL, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO, JERRY?

... WORK ON HIM! SAY SOMETHING! OH,... TELL HIM ... AH, YOU'RE PREGNANT OR SICK... OR, SHIT, ANYTHING THAT WILL MAKE HIM DO WHAT WE ASK!

IT'LL TAKE TIME... OH, JERRY, I DON'T WANT TO HURT HIM!

... THERE IS NO TIME!! I TELL YOU, I WON'T LEAVE SUNSHINE UNTIL WE BUST UP THAT MARRIAGE DEAL!! UNDERSTAND, RITA?

I... I'M SO CONFUSED.

THEN LET ME SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU... WHEN I LEAVE SUNSHINE CITY, EITHER HE'S BUSTED UP WITH THAT OLGA... OR YOU'RE BUSTED UP WITH ME! OKAY?

OH

SAVE IT... USE THOSE TEARS ON YOUR OLD MAN!!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, JERRY??

I'M GOING TO WORK ON THE OTHER END... PUT A LITTLE MUSCLE ON THAT OLGA DAME!! ... MAYBE I CAN TALK HER OUT OF IT...

SNIFF

HELEN?? HERE'S THE LATEST ON WHERE WE STAND WITH DADDY... YES, I KNOW, I KNOW IT'S BEEN THREE WEEKS NOW SINCE WE CAME DOWN HERE.

WELL, YOU KNOW, ABOUT **JERRY** AND **ME**... IT'S BEEN AWFUL!! AND THE INHERITANCE??

NO... I CAN'T BUDGE DAD! I'VE TALKED 'TILL I'M BLUE IN THE FACE... REASONING, YELLING, PLEADING... NO SOAP... HE WON'T CHANGE HIS MIND!

WHAT? OH, SURE I'VE GOT A PLAN!

I'M KEEPING DADDY AWAY FROM OLGA!!

JERRY? ...OH, HE'S BEEN WORKING ON THAT OLGA, TRYING TO TURN HER OFF DAD! SO I HARDLY SEE HIM.

YES, SURE I'LL LET YOU KNOW .. I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN IN A WEEK OR SO!

OLGA!

OLGA!!

OH, HENRY ♫♪

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN? ...'HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND ANY MORE!

OH, I'VE BEEN SO BUSY! LIKE ♫ BEFORE I WAS MARRIED! GOING TO JAI ALAI, THE DOG TRACK, THE TROTTERS.. OH ♫♪♪ IT'S A WHIRL AND I'M ENJOYING THE ACTION!

NEW HAVEN

23

I MUST SAY YOU'RE LOOKIN' TEN YEARS YOUNGER.

OH ♪♫ I FEEL IT ♫

AFTER ALL, I'M ONLY SO... I'VE STILL GOT A LOT OF PEP...

SO, WHO ARE YOU GOING OUT WITH?

BEEP BEEP

...EXCUSE ME... I'M BLOCKING THE EXIT... SEE YOU, HENRY!

YEAH, SURE, OLGA!

♫♫♫...

HI, DADDY...HEY, YOU WANT TO GO OUT FOR DINNER? JERRY WONT BE HOME...WE CAN MAKE THE 'EARLY BIRD' AT THE EATERY.

NO, RITA. I'M TIRED ALL OF A SUDDEN... :SIGH: I'LL JUST WATCH TV AND GO TO BED EARLY.

OKAY...HERE...I'VE LEFT A LITTLE WARM MILK FOR YOU... GOOD NIGHT!

THANKS, THANKS :SIGH: YAWWNN!

RING RING TICK TICK

JERRY??...WHAT? YOU'RE SPENDING **ANOTHER** NIGHT **OUT**? YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HOME FOR A WHOLE WEEK!! WHAT IS GOING ON ??

WHAT? YOU'RE **WHAT**? YOU'RE **DIVORCING ME**?! JERRY...JERRY... SHOULDN'T WE **TALK** ABOUT IT, JERRY?? WAIT!

TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK

KNOK KNOK

OLGA? EXCUSE ME, I COULDN'T SLEEP - SO I CAME OVER TO TALK TO YOU... IT'S SERIOUS!

OLGA... JERRY!

HENRY.

OH, SHIT!!

OH, WELL, HENRY, YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW IT NOW!! JERRY AND I... WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!

YEAH,...AS SOON AS MY DIVORCE FROM RITA COMES THROUGH! I FILED IT LAST WEEK!

I KNOW IT'S VERY SUDDEN, BUT IN THE LAST MONTH JERRY HAS SHOWN ME I'M STILL A YOUNG WOMAN... AND FRANKLY, TO TIE MYSELF DOWN TO AN **OLDER** MAN IS FOOLISH... I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND!

HE'S A **BUM**! OLGA, HE CAN'T MAKE A LIVING!

NOT TO WORRY, MY HUSBAND, TONY, LEFT ME **VERY** WELL PROVIDED FOR.

I WONT NEED TO WAIT AROUND FOR **YOUR** INHERITANCE! OLGA BELIEVES IN MY DEAL... SHE'LL **BACK** ME!

IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, HENRY!

YOU STILL HAVE **YOUR DAUGHTER** TO LOOK AFTER YOU.

TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK

VITAM

TICK TICK TICK TICK

HI, HELEN... NO, NOTHING NEW SINCE MY DIVORCE AND DADDY'S BREAK-UP WITH OLGA....OH, HE'S OKAY...SORTA!!

BUT, HE'S BECOME VERY QUIET... HE HARDLY EVER GOES OUT...VERY, VERY DEPENDENT ON ME!

ME?? OH, I'M OKAY, I GUESS.

.... YES, I'LL STAY HERE IN SUNSHINE AND TAKE CARE OF HIM! HE NEEDS ME NOW!

... MY DIVORCE? OH, WE SIGNED PAPERS LAST WEEK ...I'VE GOT LOTS OF TIME NOW.

JERRY?? OH, HE WENT TO MEXICO WITH OLGA! ...THEY GOT MARRIED THERE.

SO, JERRY HAS HER MONEY— SHE HAS JERRY, AND I'VE GOT DADDY!

UH, OH... I'VE GOT TO GO NOW! `BYE.

HERE'S YOUR TEA, DADDY! MY, MY WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET!

THE TEA IS TOO HOT, RITA! PUT AN ICE CUBE IN IT!

NOTES FROM THE PERIMETER

When the novel meets comics, who handles the introduction?

by Dave Schreiner

NOTES ON NOTES

Will Eisner once wrote that he feels uneasy about any sort of apologia to an artist's work. The artist is put in the position of begging for indulgence at best, or begging for mercy, at worst.

Such a thing embarrasses both parties to the transaction, artist and reader.

When I proposed a look at *A Life Force* shortly after its final installment in *Will Eisner's Quarterly* 5, he was skeptical. I strongly suspect that he consented to talk about the novel only because it had already been published.

In two long telephone conversations, we discussed structure, plot, influences and characters. Eisner was purposely vague when we discussed the themes of *A Life Force*; he continues to feel that what the novel is trying to say is something for a reader to decide.

Which is as it should be.

In certain parts of this article, I've given elements of a positive review to the novel. Eisner felt uncomfortable about this, too, feeling it could be interpreted as self-serving because it appears in a magazine bearing his name.

Those of ungenerous spirit might feel that way, but I'm not going to worry about them. The *Quarterly* is an appropriate place to begin a serious discussion of his novel, because the magazine appeals to the reader who is serious about Eisner's work in particular and the potential of the comics medium in general.

If comic books, or the comics medium, or sequential art is ever to grow beyond "two units destroying each other," works that attempt to stretch the envelope of assumed conventions must be accepted, supported, analyzed, *read.* A handful of artists—Gilbert Hernandez, Art Spiegelman, Harvey Pekar, Larry Gonick, Will Eisner, a few others—are making this attempt. If the form is to live, chances must be taken by writers and artists, and by readers.

In Eisner's case, it is noble, challenging work, not without its problems and failures, but also with its rewards—for artist and reader.

I would like to give the feeling to the audience that [a work] is unfinished. I believe that the work of art where the spectator does not collaborate is not a work of art. I like the people to perhaps build a different story on the side."

—filmmaker Jean Renoir

★ ★ ★

A man plods down an alley. A carpenter, he is out of work in the midst of the depression of the 1930s. He has vagrant dreams of immortality achieved through his work, but he is aging, and for him, work seemingly no longer exists.

He clutches his chest and sinks to the ground.

Down there, he comes eye to body with a cockroach, shaken out of a carpet from two stories up. Man tells bug about their shared struggle for survival, and about the long odds both face these tough days.

Only man, man says, is afflicted with the question of "why." Why life, why live? Only man ponders the existence of God, asking the old question: who created Whom, or Who created whom? He tells the roach that the meaning of life, if any, is only a guess.

After saving the roach from the hobnailed boots of a passerby, at the considerable risk of his own life, the man is called to supper by his wife. He struggles to his feet, climbs up the tenement steps to his apartment at 55 Dropsie Avenue, the Bronx, and in answer to his wife's question about his day, says, "Today? Today, I saved the life of a cockroach."

So begins *A Life Force,* Will Eisner's latest graphic novel, which completed its serialization in *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No. 5. The man in the alley is Jacob Shtarkah, the central

character in the novel, and about the farthest creation from a conventional comics "hero" or "antihero" as you can imagine.

Jacob Shtarkah might best be described as dumpy. The sagging of age is progressing relentlessly over his body; he has recurring heart problems; he is not—and never has been—what you would call handsome.

In the novel, he is saddled with an inescapable feeling that life has passed him by. He complains about this to himself and others at length. Life has been hard for Jacob Shtarkah.

Yet the man holds his dreams, and they feed his dim hope for a better future. Jacob doesn't seem to be a person who would ever seriously consider suicide, unlike one of the other characters in the book. Jacob is a survivor.

"When Jacob talks to the cockroach in the alley, he is speaking my thoughts," Eisner said recently in a discussion of *A Life Force*. "I wanted to draw some parallels between man's and the roach's survival. My objective was to present this debate Jacob has with himself to the reader. All of the things expressed in this novel are for the reader to decide. It's in the nature of an intellectual exercise."

Eisner goes beyond simple explication of plot to address questions about the human condition. Instead of merely showing us the "how" of a story, Eisner goes on to ask us about the "why" of life. By doing this, he requires more participation than a reader is normally prepared to give a comic book.

He asks us to think, and not only about the eternal verities. He requires us to fill in certain gaps about relationships in the story. He gives some background, but he asks the reader to imagine the Great Depression and its effects. While some of his audience may be all too familiar with that time, it's a good bet that the majority are not. And he asks us to draw much of the psychology and motivations of his characters from the impressions he gives of them.

Eisner points the direction, but we pick our own way through.

Jacob Shtarkah, for example. "Shtarkah means 'strength' in Yiddish, but Jacob is not all that strong. I wanted to convey the impression that none of these characters, with the possible exception of one, are especially sophisticated or worldly.

"Jacob does not know how to deal with the fact that he's out of work, and later on, he doesn't realize that he's dealing with gangsters."

★ ★ ★

The Great Depression is the catalyst for most of what happens in *A Life Force*. It hangs over everything in the story, just as it did in the 1930s.

Those who were supporting themselves and families during its reign were devastated; those who grew up during this time had their psyches and attitudes toward life shaped irrevocably. The depression was one of two events that was central to Eisner's generation, the other being the Second World War.

Eisner gives an overview of the depression in framing devices consisting of newspaper clippings from the era. These clippings give us the minimum of the history we need to follow the novel's plot.

Copyright © 1985 by Will Eisner

Jacob Shtarkah, aging carpenter, unrequited dreamer, and main character in *A Life Force*.

The depression is dated from the autumn of 1929, when a stock market bloated on speculation and short cash outlays experienced a crash. In the 1920s, it seemed as if everyone on Wall Street did nothing buy buy stocks on borrowed cash and make paper profits.

In October, 1929, everybody apparently tried to sell. There were few buyers. The psychology and mechanics of the crash involved theoretical money, rosy optimism, and greed, colliding with reality at the top of a boom, and resulted in a selling panic as speculators tried to raise the cash they didn't have. Ephemeral fortunes built on paper transfers and little or borrowed money ("buying on margin") disappeared overnight.

A number of ruined stockplayers jumped from Wall Street windows. So many, in fact, that in years to come, the situation of a stockbroker taking a dive was played for laughs in blackout sketches on the burlesque circuit and in magazine gag panels.

At the time, it was not so funny.

The depression was a nationwide—a worldwide—phenomenon. Almost everyone was broke. No one knew where the money went, but it was certain that nobody anybody knew personally had any. Lives were changed forever as Americans hit the road looking for something to eat and a place to sleep. And a job. Farmers were hit hard and began the last great migration to the city that today sees the once familiar family farm becoming a myth from the past. City dwellers were hit hard and lined up at soup kitchens by the thousands. They stayed in shelters, flophouses and on the street. Starvation was not an unheard of event in America.

There is disagreement about when the depression finally ended. With the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932, a mass of government-sponsored work projects, social welfare programs and legislation aimed at helping the worker and businessman were gradually instituted. Some recovery was noted in 1935 and 1936, but many parts of the United States and many Americans felt the effects of a punctured economy until the business boom brought about by World War II.

★ ★ ★

The other major male character in *A Life Force* is Elton Shaftsbury II, who embodies the Wall Street broker. Eisner introduces him as a man who sells the family business as quickly as possible after he inherits it so he can follow the gentlemanly pursuit of the stock market.

He lives in a world of surface and appearance. His "skills were mainly centered in the art of being accepted and the maintenance of the shallow relationships that were normal for his 'set.' " As a broker, Elton loses everything and is forced for a time to sell apples on Wall Street. This is a reverberation from Eisner's own direct experience. He recalls selling newspapers as a youth on Wall Street

alongside once proud plutocrats in fur coats at their apple stands. Previously, this had been the province of impoverished World War I veterans.

Shaftsbury, just as in reality and the gag panels, contemplates a leap from a balcony. He gets as far as the top of a balcony railing at 55 Dropsie Avenue when he is called back by Rebecca and Rifka Shtarkah, Jacob's daughter and wife, who ask him to light their apartment for the Sabbath. He does, and they pay him 50 cents.

This gesture leads Shaftsbury to reconsider his plunge, and eventually paves the way to his rehabilitation.

Shaftsbury is an example of a person who changes over the course of the novel. In fact, his change is rather expedient to the plot, and Eisner feels he is perhaps the weakest link in the novel. He is portrayed initially as a weak character, and admits as much to Rebecca. But he quickly becomes clever, brave and resourceful, almost a Galahad.

Eisner's strength with Shaftsbury is showing the man's essential immaturity while taking pains to show his humanity. Elton tells Rebecca that "my time was spent at sports. . .Before I knew it, I was 37. . .The 'crash' ended my social life. It all seems to have passed me by." Yet he can realistically change from being a one-dimensional drone, a Roaring '20s Yuppie, to a more complicated, but still immature, person who is at least getting more involved with life.

He is still growing at novel's end, and one suspects that he's in for some more unpleasant life experiences in the years to come.

"I tried to portray him as an expert in a very narrow field," Eisner said. "He's an expert stock manipulator. He sets up Jacob and his partner, Angelo, in business, and protects them financially when there is trouble. But he downplays any problems his marrying Rebecca might cause. He can't fathom that there might be trouble because Rebecca is a Jew and he is not. He's not very sophisticated when it comes to life."

★ ★ ★

The economic upheaval of the 1930s spurred social upheaval both in the United States and abroad. The depression sped the growth of the labor movement in the United States. It also facilitated fascism and communism and brought to the surface anti-Semitic feelings. The latter engulfed Europe, and especially Germany, but it also smeared the United States. Eisner deals with all of this in *A Life Force*.

In *Quarterly* 3's episode, a teenager named Willie eschews the call of worldwide unity under the Red banner by staying at home to eat his mother's soup. Earlier, Willie had helped plan a mass demonstration in which an organizer from Moscow (he resembles Stalin) directed that young women with babies position themselves in front of the pickets, and take the brunt of the action when professional agitators provoked the police.

In 1929, Moscow had decided that no compromises or patient take overs of capitalist societies were needed, as obviously, capitalism was in its death throes. The Comintern set a deliberate policy of violent confrontation.

In the early 1930s, the workers' rights to organize unions and to strike without reprisal were finally recognized. The labor movement was indeed a force to be reckoned with as desperately poor skilled and unskilled laborers at last found their cause being met with sympathy by the public at large, and by the government.

Organized crime saw this burgeoning movement as a potential gold mine, as it surely was, and began making their own violent inroads into this area of social progress.

All of this set the stage for much hysteria and confusion.

The labor movement in this country was often called communistic, and while there were communist organizers and even the take over of some of the unions, they were not so strong as management figures and certain orators liked to claim. The communists became, in fact, a convenient excuse for industrialists to resist union organizing with violence. Even after the unions won the right to organize through government legislation, it was not unheard of for pitched battles to occur at struck plants. Usually these battles involved clubs, bottles and fists, but in one famous case at a Ford plant in Michigan, guns wielded by hired management "goons" came into play. These tactics served to gain the unions more sympathy.

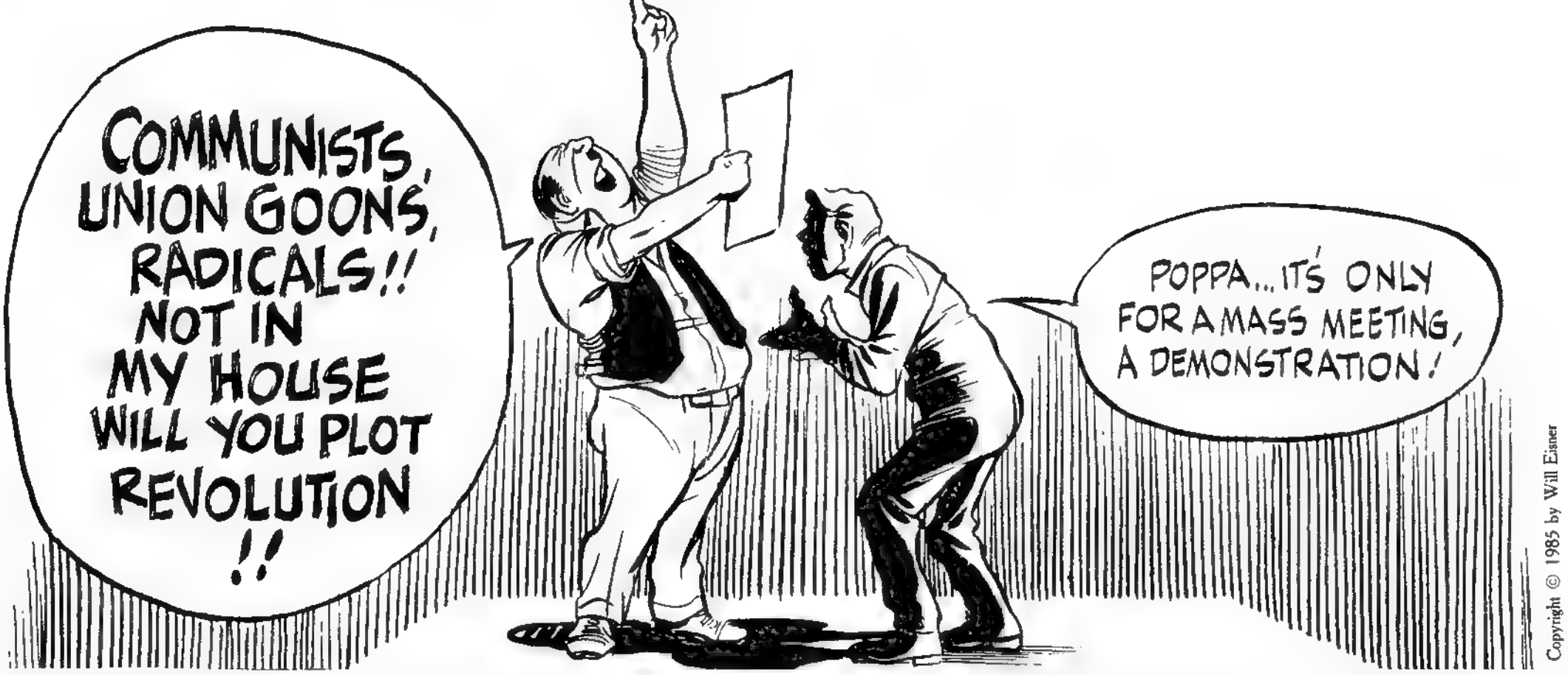
Criminal dabblings in the unions also led to some take overs, a few allegedly still extant. Gangster-run unions typically were organized to milk as much money as possible from members, while extorting as much as possible through "protection" from business owners. Eliminating the thugs from the ranks of organized labor was a much tougher proposition than eliminating the communists. The process continues today.

In 1934, the time *A Life Force* deals with, none of these distinctions were generally known. The idealistic Willie sees an egalitarian union as part of a united worker front marching toward a better world. His father sees union members as the bunch of hoodlums who busted up his shop and crippled Uncle Max. It was quite possible for them to come into conflict while not knowing that they were arguing about two different matters.

Eisner's chapter called "The Revolutionary" is autobiographical, at least as far as the events facing Willie are concerned: to leave his home, possibly forever, and become a Marxist sign painter with Ben; or to remain in the bosom of the family, where there is love and a bit of security.

Willie is not in the line of great political activists who were never concerned with daily living. Especially in times of change and instability, the reality of getting through the day

Elton Shaftsbury, another central character in the novel, contemplates the coin that helped save him from suicide.


COMMUNISTS, UNION GOONS, RADICALS!! NOT IN MY HOUSE WILL YOU PLOT REVOLUTION !!
POPPA... IT'S ONLY FOR A MASS MEETING, A DEMONSTRATION!
Copyright © 1985 by Will Eisner

Willie and his father talk at cross purposes about the future of the American worker. The conflict is resolved when Willie decides to stay with his family rather than paint signs for a demonstration.

must be faced. It was typical of the time, Eisner says, for people to be faced with the choices facing Willie.

Within the context of *A Life Force,* Willie's choice is inevitable. The strength of the family is one of the themes of the story, and it is echoed throughout. In *Quarterly* 4, Jacob objects to the match between Shaftsbury and Rebecca because Shaftsbury is a gentile, and a marriage to Jacob's daughter will break the sense of tradition and family that Jacob has.

One more dream shattered.

Jacob has another reason for his objection. He knows well that anti-Semitism is on the rise. He tries to tell Shaftsbury: "Anti-Semitic fever is infecting the world. . .like a germ inside which comes out when times are bad. . .Later, when the romance wears off, maybe you'll have trouble."

The advice is, of course, shrugged off by Shaftsbury, who feels Jacob's quaint notions have nothing to do with him. Jacob has just gone through the ordeal of smuggling Frieda Gold into the country out of Hitler's Germany.

What happened in Germany was anti-Semitism carried to its ghoulishly logical extreme.

The United States, too, had its brush with hatred of the Jews in the 1930s. Rightist speakers poured gasoline on the embers of bigotry during this time of flux.

Radio personality Fr. Charles Coughlin began with cries for social justice, the redistribution of wealth, and a cautious endorsement of Roosevelt's New Deal. But eventually, the sermons degenerated into diatribes against "international bankers," the most popular buzzwords for "Jew." In 1936, when the flames were roaring during a presidential campaign, the Jews as a group, along with Franklin Roosevelt (a gentile), were blamed for economic and social ills.

Demagogues such as Gerald L. K. Smith and Huey Long echoed these sentiments.

As Hitler's philosophy became better known in this country, and as he rebuilt a country in his image, German-American bunds sprang up in the United States. There were Silver Shirts and Brown Shirts; there was an old stand-by in the Ku Klux Klan, ready to leap on the traditional scapegoat, and the isolationist America First organization.

All of them agreed that Hitler was a great guy, or at least was impressive in a positive way. All of them waxed prosperous in the 1930s, finding adherents among the disaffected and among the wealthy.

Shaftsbury's boss, stockbroker Smith, is an anti-Semite who has a Jew as a partner. Weiss/White suffers in silence, or tries to ignore his partner. Smith seems to be an all-around bigot, of a common enough American variety, but he seems to relish the Jews as number one on his hate parade. Yet Shaftsbury presumes total immunity from any effects of anti-Semitism.

Jacob, who knows his history, who is aware of the fleeting nature of romantic love, who cares for his family, knows better.

★ ★ ★

On background: "I'd be very disappointed if readers took *A Life Force* to be a Jewish novel. I don't consider it that at all. There are Jewish characters and situations because that is my background. That is how I grew up. But the things I'm talking about here are universal experiences. They may grow out of a Jewish experience, but everyone is concerned with what I'm talking about here. Survival and questioning the meaning of living are not unique to the Jews."

★ ★ ★

Another type of family is looked at in the novel. This one is represented by Pete and the Black Hand organization, of which Pete is a solid leader.

Pete's an oily customer, always looking for a chink in someone's armor so his group can gain an advantage. To Eisner, he's "not a total blackguard. He is taking care of his responsibilities. He is taking care of the people under his care. That he does this outside the law means nothing to him. Not many people know that the Mafia started as a benevolent, protective association for Sicilians. Angelo is scared stiff of their reprisals, but he is also a beneficiary of their care. He is still under their wing."

Becoming established in this country around the turn of the 20th century, this family did indeed protect the new Italian immigrants in the various ghettoes of American cities. There were also Irish, Jewish and German gangs, or organizations, or families, or "benevolent associations," which didn't let niceties like law and conventional morality stand in the way of prosperity. Within the group, any group, however, there was a strict morality enforced by the group's own lawmen.

The city gangs prospered during Prohibition, which began at the end of World War I, and after the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933, began to branch into other areas of "business," including labor organizing. Eisner uses Pete's particular gang as a plot device. Pete and his boys seem to be everywhere, and in the immigrants' ghetto, they were.

While the FBI chased the more spectacular rural bank robbers of the 1930s, like the Dillinger gang and Ma Barker and her "boys," the city gangs were becoming entrenched. Gang wars during Prohibition tended to weed out the weak. Repeal weeded out the one-dimensional gangs, so only those groups imaginative enough to diversify were left to make all kinds of money from all kinds of vice and opportunity.

A few of the more gaudy city gangsters, like Al Capone, were put behind bars through the ministrations of the Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service. They were

brought to justice not with guns on the hot street, but by adding machines in the tax auditor's office.

★ ★ ★

On working readers: "I used shorthand in the book. A graphic novel uses fixed images within a given plot, but within that, I'm asking the reader to stop and think while he or she is going along with me. The reader in this particular book has to be somewhat more sophisticated than the youngster who's had a very limited life experience. The action between Jacob and his wife is really done in shorthand. The reader has to supply the intermediate meanings between the relationships. I'm not allowing the reader any choice in the matter of how these characters look, but when Rifka and Jacob interact, I'm asking the reader to supply a certain amount of imagination."

★ ★ ★

A Life Force is a work that gives the impression of a life going on for the characters outside the panel walls. You get the feeling that these people keep going on about their business after Eisner averts his gaze.

What indeed will happen to Elton and Rebecca after the romance wears off? Will Elton pop his boss when the boss tells yet another joke about the Jew and the nigger? Will he ignore it? Or will Elton laugh?

What happens to Willie, the sign painter, after this period? We know in a general way what happened to Eisner. But what were the personal choices that led him to choose the career he did? Will Jacob and Frieda reunite in Israel? Is there more to Rifka than making supper?

A fact about the novel is that none of the major characters are total creatures of good and evil. Jacob is one example. He is dissatisfied with his life, and he has good reason to be.

Yet, it's hard to feel pity for him because he's complaining all the time about his dissatisfaction. While self-pity is almost never immediately recognizable in oneself, it's always instantly apparent in someone else. Self-pity and griping in others irritates us; for one thing, it breaks our concentration on our own self-pity and griping. Jacob's whining keeps the reader from plunging into despair over his—and let's make no mistake about this—extremely hard lot in life. Jacob has enough despair for reader and character alike.

A familiar sight in America during the depression: people lining up for bread. The depression was felt by every section of American society when a boom economy went bust and massive unemployment resulted. The breadline was a great social equalizer. This scene is from New York in 1930.

Photo from the Luttrell Collection.

GEE... ELTON... YOU'RE A SMOOTH SKATER... VERY CLASSY... I MEAN YOU HAVE A CERTAIN STYLE ABOUT EVERYTHING!

ELTON... CAN I ASK YOU A PERSONAL QUESTION?

SURE

...ARE YOU, ...I MEAN WERE YOU EVER MARRIED OR, ANYTHING?!

NO!

SO, HOW COME?

OH, I DON'T KNOW... ALL THE GIRLS IN MY SET THOUGHT I WAS ... WELL, SORT OF... AH, DULL

Y'SEE, REBECCA, I WAS NEVER MUCH OF A... A... LADIES' MAN... MY TIME WAS SPENT AT SPORTS... WELL, BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS 37... THE 'CRASH' ENDED MY SOCIAL LIFE... IT ALL SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED ME BY!

OH, ELTON, ...HARDLY!

...AND... YOU? REBECCA... HOW ABOUT YOU...

VERY SIMPLE... I'M RATHER PLAIN, A 27 YEAR-OLD SCHOOL TEACHER ...IN MY CIRCLE, THAT ADDS UP TO AN OLD MAID!

NOT TO ME!

OH, ELTON YOU'RE SWEET!

THAT'S HIM, BOSS!

OKAY, LUPO, LET'S GO!

But Jacob's attitudes reflect universal human traits. Self-absorption is a fact of life. We *are* always dissatisfied. We want *more*. Or maybe just *different*. At the end of the novel, Jacob is still dissatisfied, even though his material life has improved considerably. Such is life.

Jacob's partner, Angelo, is another character in shades of gray. He is a victim of forces beyond his control. He's an illegal alien and poverty stricken, and he has a demanding "family."

Angelo would have set Shaftsbury up for a possible murder if Jacob hadn't come up with a job in the nick of time. (As it is, Angelo's wife fingers Shaftsbury). Angelo genially involves Jacob in the Black Hand when Jacob wants to get Frieda out of Germany, thus obligating Jacob to grant certain of Pete's requests. If Eisner hadn't graphically depicted the scene, I would have suspected Angelo of torching the lumberyard.

But Angelo is a likable guy because he seems to be ignorant of most of the trouble he causes, and because he doesn't have much choice in any of his dealings. He is a trapped man trying to stay alive in America, and he is at the mercy of his trappers. Somehow, he doesn't seem to suffer much angst over this, so we have to admire his survival.

The only truly pitiful character is Aaron, the Enchanted Prince. Eisner is sympathetic to Aaron, but he doesn't treat him in a maudlin way. Eisner takes us inside Aaron's troubled head to show us the lost brilliance and the agony. When Eisner takes him outdoors, an element of humor colors the tragedy as the Prince stumbles over a thug in an alley. (In an accurate character observation, the armed thug, impervious to fear, draws back from the obviously defective but harmless Aaron. We always try to distance ourselves from the unpredictable). When Aaron returns to his room, Eisner shows both fear and wonder on his face.

All of these characters have more than one dimension. We feel ambivalent toward each at different times. Sometimes they are inconsistent, as when Frieda, in answer to Jacob's bitterness, says she needs a meaning to live life, and a page later believes that what she's been through in Germany has left her dead inside. Sometimes they're a little unbelievable, like Shaftsbury. Sometimes they're a little too pat, like Rabbi Bensohn, Rifka, and Pete.

But basically they are equipped with the traits that make humans both aggravating and splendid.

★ ★ ★

On bitterness: "Sometimes my work may convey a sense of bitterness on the outside, but really it's not. You can't come out of the scrimmage of life without some aches and bruises that you refer to once in awhile. Looking back, you ask 'why did that have to happen?' You see people whose lives have been twisted and torn apart, and you wonder why that had to happen. It's a start of a philosophy. As far as bitterness is concerned, I don't really know what that means. When I started *A Life Force*, I began with the question 'Are we no different from the cockroach?', but by the time I finished it, I answered my own question and I don't think I left a bitter taste."

★ ★ ★

On influences: "Both *A Life Force* and *A Contract With God* are influenced mostly by the theatre. I see them as a kind of live theatre. Many people identify my work with the motion picture. *The Spirit* is always equated to films, and there's no doubt some influence involved, because films were part of my early visual and literary nutrition.

"But I was always fascinated with theatre. The lighting in these works is theatrical, and that's not too far away from life experiences. As a city dweller, you live in a kind of stage set. Lighting comes from above. Your perspective vision is either from above or from below, or with converging lines of perspective going upward or downward. There isn't too much that you see on a long horizon.

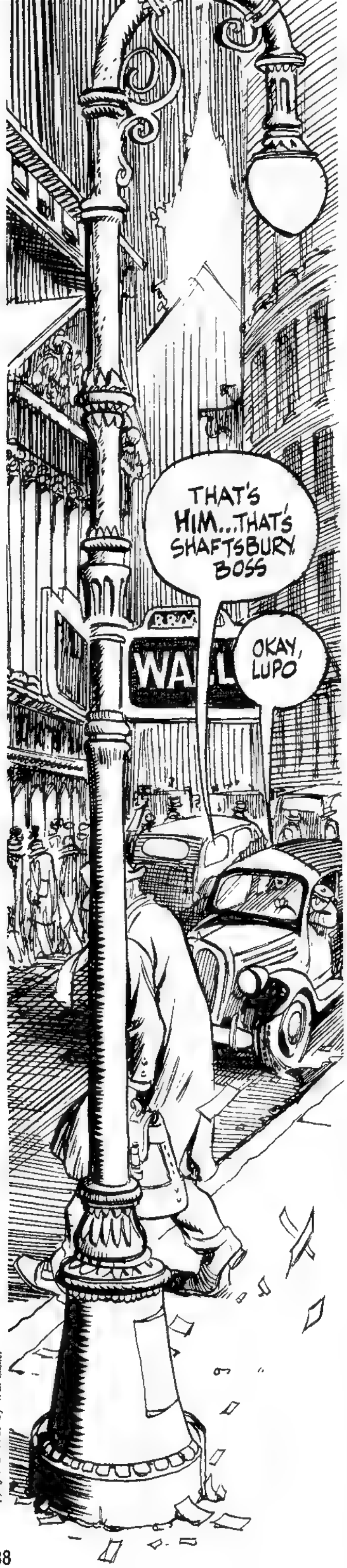
"Artists see light and set their stages under the influence of where they grew up. Early environment is important. I don't think in terms of large panoramas, as an artist who grew up in a rural area might.

"Influences are funny things. In the comics business, that word generally means stealing or swiping. Everything influences me. Watching WPA [Works Project Administration] theatre in lofts during the depression influenced me. New York and Florida influence me.

"You generally pick from things that are well done in other areas and try to introduce

Eisner says he watched ballet when he was a student to learn more about action and anatomy in motion. He was also fascinated by its ability to tell a story in pantomime. At left, a dance on skates visually underlines the growing bond between Elton and Rebecca. At right, another familiar depression-era sight: an appleseller.

Photo from the Luttrell Collection.



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them into what you're doing. When I was in the Art Students League, I'd go over to the ballet on 59th Street. It was a way I had of learning action and anatomy in motion. Pantomime. There's rhythm, movement, timing.

"In *A Life Force*, I was thinking of the structure of *War and Peace*. That was done on a monumental, historical landscape, yet it dealt with individual lives, all interlocked. I didn't sit down with the firm intention of imitating Tolstoy. But if I had never read *War and Peace*, I might not have understood that it could be done."

★ ★ ★

There are two problems associated with graphic novels that concern Eisner. One has to do with the medium itself. The other has to do with the audience.

An advantage an artist has in graphic narrative is that the art can eliminate much of a setting's description. When Jacob walks down the alley at the beginning of the book, Eisner spends no time at all with word descriptions of buildings soaring in the background, the lattice-work fire escapes coming down to the street, the debris on the ground. There is no narration about Jacob's shuffling, defeated walk, his look of a man punched in the stomach. It's in the art.

There is a flip side. "Visuals are precise," Eisner said. "If you draw a man with a fat nose, it leaves very little room for the reader to conjecture what the size of his nose is.

"In text, you're creating word analogies. Writers deal with allusions in the sense that they can, through dialogue and description, evoke images and feelings which the reader can embellish in his or her own mind.

"We have two mediums which are not necessarily meant to replace each other. Visuals can't entirely replace words; they can replace descriptions and actions, often in exciting ways.

"I've had a problem with stereotypes in this line of work. I got some complaints from readers that Rabbi Bensohn is a stereotype. They wanted to see a different type of person. I got some feedback from one of my students, who thought the Italians were portrayed through stereotypes.

"The fact is, this medium deals in stereotypes. It is a big obstacle, because you have to portray something visually, and the reader is cut off from deciding what these people look like. It is a continuing struggle to break through this inherent problem."

The other quandary for graphic novels or works in Eisner's mold is that while the reader doesn't have to provide a visual image for each character, s/he has to draw on experience to get the full impact of the novel.

"The reader doesn't have to contribute much if I'm showing two mutants tearing each other apart. There is really nothing to relate to there, except for a personal satisfaction in seeing two people or two units destroy each other.

"It's another matter in a novel attempting to deal with reality. The audience is there somewhere, it's just a matter of reaching them. I'm not able to reach them yet in the comic book stores."

★ ★ ★

Each time Eisner approaches the serious graphic storytelling form, he takes a few more steps in his personal quest to break new ground in sequential art. His first graphic novel, *A Contract With God,* owes much to his *Spirit* stories in that they are short, episodic pieces, each self-contained, each with its own plot, climax and conclusion.

A Life Force is more in the nature of a true novel in that the major characters appear in each segment, there are a series of little climaxes which spin the characters' lives forward but do not leave them in a position where they either live happily ever after, or die miserable, grimy deaths. The plot leads to a climax and then a conclusion of sorts, but there are other conclusions down the road for all these characters.

Life goes on.

"*A Contract With God* was basically written with a *Grand Hotel* scheme in mind. The tenement was used as a vehicle in which the people were living, a microcosm of life, an ant hill of some kind. The original title was *A Tenement in the Bronx*, and it was really built around the superintendent, who appeared in each episode. I wrote each chapter independently, and they were very, very clearly defined in my mind.

"*A Life Force* was much more unified. One of the problems I faced there was that the characters took on lives of their own—as they often do—and sometimes I was forced to change the story outline because the characters just wouldn't perform the way I originally intended.

"As an example, when Jacob and Frieda meet again after 30 years, I originally had them fall in love immediately. I was forced, when I got to that part of the novel, to put myself in their shoes. What would I do if I was suddenly confronted by a past love? I decided that they would be very cautious about any involvement. They would not rush into anything.

"Problems like that add interest."

★ ★ ★

On his graphic novels: "It must be understood that I'm trying, perhaps presumptuously, to achieve a literary level—not in a dictionary sense, but in a broader sense. I realize that I'm dealing with a medium that has some limitations. I'm constantly reaching to the perimeters of this medium, and I haven't yet found the total point of no return. I think every time I go to work on something, I find that I have pushed it a little farther, and there's always more yet to go."

SHOP TALK

1960s greeting card art with Sherlock Holmes.

EISNER: We're in **Jack Davis's** studio, a sunlit wing of his hillside home in Hartsdale, NY. On one wall facing a golf course is the drawing board. In the center of a cluttered room is a pool table buried under posters and artwork. Under the table are cowboy boots. I'm here to chat with Jack and **Harvey Kurtzman,** who joined us today. Let me start by telling you, Jack, that the main thrust of this meeting is shop talk, an exchange of working habits and philosophies. To me, you have always represented a major contribution to the contemporary history of comic book art. All the professionals I've talked to overwhelmingly regard your work as very influential on the singular group of comic book artists who somehow combine humor with realistic drafstmanship. You moved from the comic books on to what most comic book artists regard as the high ground of advertising and magazine illustration. Comic book artists still regard this area as a kind of upper level of the profession. They think of someone like you as having graduated from comic books and moved upward. At any rate, when did you start, when did you enter the comic book field?

DAVIS: I think it probably first started when I was in the service, in the Navy during World War II. In 1943, in Pensacola, Florida, I drew for the *Navy News.* It was the paper for the naval station there. And I did cartooning in high school; we all did, probably. That was about the only thing I could do, I was never a good student. I got into the Navy and did that, and after the Navy, I came out with the G. I. bill and went to the University of Georgia and studied fine art. I had worked dur-

THE WILD LOOKING MAN'S STRONG FINGERS CLOSED ON THE HUNCHBACK'S THROAT! SUDDENLY HE SCREAMED IN PAIN! THE HUNCHBACK HAD FLUNG THE CONTENTS OF THE ACID BOTTLE INTO HIS FACE...

AAAAH

SHRIEKING HYSTERICALLY, THE SHAGGY ONE PLUNGED THE HUNCHBACK'S FACE DOWN UPON THE GLOWING TOP OF THE RED-HOT STOVE! THE HUNCHBACK HOWLED! A HISSING SOUND WAS HEARD AND A CLOUD OF SMOKE AROSE FROM THE BURNING FLESH...

EEEEEE

SUDDENLY THE GORY SCENE WAS BLOTTED OUT BY A FLASH OF RED VELVET AS THE CURTAINS CLOSED! A GASP ERUPTED FROM THE SHOCKED AUDIENCE! THEN A TUMULT OF APPLAUSE EXPLODED!

BRAVO! STUPENDOUS! CLAP! CLAP!

THE CURTAINS PARTED AND THE HUNCHBACK STEPPED FORWARD, HIS FACE CHARRED! THEN THE SHAGGY HAIRED MAN CAME OUT, HIS FACE HORRIBLY DISFIGURED BY THE ACID BURNS! THEY BOWED TO THE CHEERING PLAY-GOERS...

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! TWEEEET!

AS THE ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD MOVED TOWARD THE EXITS, BABBLING... TWO AMERICANS REMAINED IN THEIR SEATS...

WELL, ARTHUR? WHAT DID YOU *THINK* OF IT?

TREMENDOUS, MILES! THE MOST AMAZING DISPLAY OF *HORROR* I HAVE EVER SEEN!

THE TWO MEN STARED UP AT THE RED-VELVET DRAWN CURTAINS...

I WANTED YOU TO *SEE* IT! I *KNEW* YOU'D LIKE IT! DO YOU THINK THEY'D GO FOR IT BACK IN THE UNITED STATES?

ARE PARISIANS ANY DIFFERENT THAN NEW YORKERS, MILES? BROADWAY WOULD GO MAD OVER THIS STUFF!

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING, ARTHUR! THE *HORROR EFFECTS* OF *THE GRAND GUIGNOL* ARE ALL *CLOSELY GUARDED SECRETS!*

I'M SURE WE CAN MAKE A DEAL WITH THEM, MILES! OH-OH! HERE COMES M'SIEU MATIER... THE OWNER!

Copyright © 1985 William Gaines, EC Comics

Example of Davis' EC work, from "Well-Cooked Hams," in *Tales from the Crypt* No. 27, 1952.

ing the summers with **Ed Dodd,** who drew *Mark Trail.* I would do the inking, and I would do backgrounds. He would do the figures. He said I should go to New York, which I had planned to do anyway. I wanted a strip, a comic strip. I had prepared one, so I decided to attend the New York Art Students League, look for work, and live off the G. I. bill for a year. I went around, but my work was very bad, and I got depressed. Finally, one day on the bulletin board, somebody said they needed an inker at the *Herald-Tribune.* That was for *The Saint,* by **Leslie Charteris. Mike Roy** drew it. I inked again, like I did for **Ed Dodd.** But pretty soon, I was out on the street. Then I started looking around at the comic books. I went down to EC. My work was fairly grotesque, big feet, ugly things, whatever. **Al Feldstein** assigned me a script, and that was the first time I had ever had a chance to do my own artwork. I brought it back to them and they liked it, and it kept on rolling from there. Harvey's...

EISNER: When did all that happen? In '55 or '56, I was downtown running a comics shop...

DAVIS: This was in '51 or '52...

EISNER: Oh, in '52 I dropped *The Spirit* and I went into educational comics. But, Harvey, you were up at EC at that time, weren't you?

KURTZMAN: It would have to be around '52 or '53...

EISNER: We sound like three Civil War veterans *[laughs].*

DAVIS: Well, I'm not too good at dates, but I do remember that I was very lucky and fortunate to work with Harvey [on *Two Fisted Tales, Frontline Combat* and *Mad].* I learned a lot from him, and he is a very good teacher. He practically did all of the work laying out, and he almost did the pencils for me...

EISNER: Who wrote the stories?

DAVIS: Harvey did.

KURTZMAN: We did a combination of things. I wrote the stories, by and large, and we tried experiments. We had Jack write some of his own stories. He had some pretty memorable stuff. In fact, it's unfortunate that Jack didn't do as much writing as I did. He's a good writer.

EISNER: When you wrote, Harvey, did you also do rough sketches?

KURTZMAN: I made layouts. I'd do a thumbnail, and then a big tracing sketch with the lettering in place...

DAVIS: When you'd pick up a story, Harvey would sit down with you and he would read it to you. He acted it out, all the way through, the horses, if there were horses, and everything. When he got through with it, you felt like you'd *lived* the story. It was very, very good.

EISNER: That's a wonderful approach...

KURTZMAN: It wasn't as arbitrary as it might sound. In doing one of those stories, a lot of research went into it, and I just had to pass that research on. It was some kind of ego thing, I guess. I probably drove everybody crazy with my demands, and I probably still do.

DAVIS: I think Harvey had in his mind what he wanted to produce and it would have been impossible for him to produce all of it by himself, so he fed it out to **Wally Wood** and **Willie Elder** and **Johnny Severin** and myself. He'd get you in the room and you'd talk it over. You *had* to feel it. It was a great thing, and I don't think you'll find many editors like that now. Harvey was really a producer.

EISNER: I don't know how others do it now, but in my shop we ran things pretty much that way. With *The Spirit,* I usually knew what I wanted. After awhile, no piece of work went out of the shop without my hand in it somewhere, without my doing something, and I imagine that's what Harvey did.

DAVIS: Well, both of you are great storytellers...

KURTZMAN: I might add that Jack's one of the best storytellers around.

DAVIS: I can take what somebody has done and if I *feel* it, then I can really do a good job on it. If I don't feel it, it shows, and right now, you said that I was in cartooning and advertising, and sometimes it gets a little boring. I'm doing little happy children and a happy household and housewives. I would like to be doing something like I used to be doing, with a little emotion to it. But I'm not having to work as hard and the money is very, very good. I have a rep who handles everything.

EISNER: Hmmm...There's really nothing wrong with that. I've been trying hard to figure out what is wrong with that, and I can't.

DAVIS: I've been very lucky.

EISNER: Well, you have a singular style with which I've always been empathetic. My thinking has always gone along with a lot of humor in the art, combining humor and realistic art.

DAVIS: A lot of this comes from Harvey. Again, his animation and his movements, to me,

In the 1960s, Davis attempted a daily syndicate gag strip about the Civil War.

Whutcha call this here stuff Mr. Fryer?
Them's Hush Puppies.
You sometimes toss 'em to pups to keep 'em hushed.
KABOOM!
ONE O' THESE DAYS THEM YANKEES'LL HIT SOMETHIN'!

Bo Rearguard! You made it back! Did you get the message through enemy lines?
No suh, I wuz captured and then escaped!
The message! What happened to the message? How did you get rid of it?
Erp!
HALT STRANGER! ADVANCE AND BE RECO'NIZED!
I DON'T MEAN TA BE FRIGHTNIN' YOU FARMERS, BUT THERE'S A WAR GOIN' ON ROUND HERE AND YOU COULD GIT HURT!
NOW YOU GIT BACK HOME AND MIND YO CROPS!
GENERAL GRANT SHOULD DRESS MORE LIKE AN OFFICER. SOMEBODY MIGHT MISTAKE HIM FOR A FARMER!

More Civil War humor.

makes him one of the best artists around—*and he never draws!*

KURTZMAN: We were a good collection of talent when I think of the old days back with EC. We had this pool of talent with Jack and Willie and Wally, myself, John. Everybody was sort of in competition in a sense, where you had to do your best. You were embarrassed not to do your best, because everybody else was doing their best. It led to some of the finest work in the business...

DAVIS: And it made an awful lot of money [*chuckles*]. About 50 bucks a page?

KURTZMAN: Yeah, not much pay, but you got a lot of satisfaction out of it.

EISNER: Jack, did you ever think of yourself as a writer? You said you'd written that first strip...

DAVIS: Well, I never have, but just here lately—and we were talking earlier about retiring and all—I would love to maybe put out my own children's book or a book on golf, something with humor. Writing is very hard for me. It takes a long time. If I would get an idea, then that's something else. I don't think there's anybody, really, who can write for me what I would like to illustrate, except probably Harvey. Then again, we've been going our separate ways, and I'm not sure he'd be interested in doing a golf book or anything like that. He's got his own things. When I retire or whatever I do, I'd like to think about doing some sort of children's book or something like that.

EISNER: Let's talk a bit about how you regarded comics. I presumed in my preamble here that comics were a route for you to go somewhere.

DAVIS: Well, when I was in grammar school, I couldn't wait to turn the Sunday page to the comics. Open it up and there was *Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim* and **Harold Foster,** [*Prince Valiant*] and I would lay on the floor and pore over this. I would absorb all of that. It was awesome, terrific. I even wrote Foster a letter and he sent me one of his Sunday pages.

KURTZMAN: Do you still have it?

EISNER: You could probably retire on it [*laughter*].

DAVIS: But I don't know, I've always liked to draw.

EISNER: Have you ever thought of yourself as a painter, a serious artist at any one time?

DAVIS: No, no, I never did. I always wanted to be a cartoonist. I think the fine arts helped, but when I look back and I see the studies that **Wally Wood** and **Joe Kubert** did—the anatomy—I don't think I ever got that far.

EISNER: For me, the Art Students League, for the brief time I attended, was one of my foundations. What I know about anatomy or drawing, I got there. Also, whatever pretension I had for the fine arts came from there, because I had the opportunity to study some painting, too. But the whole atmosphere at the Art Students League was...fine arts.

DAVIS: Well, I was only there for less than a half-year. I went at night to take "Life" courses and the teacher would only come around maybe once a week and spend about 30 minutes with you. We had a proctor who set up a model and all you did was draw it. You would compare your work to other people around you, and there were some very good students there.

EISNER: I had a similar experience, and in those days, 1936, I got a chance to study anatomy with George Bridgeman. I owe him whatever I know. They'd give out scholarships for the summer to promising high school students and that's how I got in. My folks couldn't afford to pay for the tuition.

DAVIS: I had a Mr. McNulty...

EISNER: He was a very good artist, good at animation, too. Let's talk about your perception of the comic book field at the time you worked with Harvey. Now it's referred to as a "Golden Era," specifically, the early EC adventure stories that you did...

DAVIS: Well, going back to it, I never really was interested in comic books at all. I loved your work when I saw it; I ate that up. I wanted to be a syndicated cartoonist. When I failed at that, when I couldn't get into that, then I found that comic books could use my work. That's when I became interested in comic books. What Harvey did, with *Mad* and *Two Fisted Tales,* was a lot of fun. It was great and I enjoyed it. The horror bit, you know...with all of my stuff...one night we had a big bonfire and I burned all of those comic books [*chuckles*]. It was grotesque and I batted it out, because as soon as I'd take it in, I'd get money. But still, I enjoy drawing gruesome things, and I don't know what kind of personality I have...

KURTZMAN: You'd be surprised how many people have been influenced by you. People like **Steven Spielberg** with the *Poltergeist* movie, that was pure **Jack Davis.**

DAVIS: Really? I thought it was more of a **Wally Wood.** Oh, the horror, to me, was kind of alike to what I do, but...

KURTZMAN: Your influence is deeper than you think, and it marches on. People who are now in power positions in Hollywood are making a lot of money through your influence.

DAVIS: Don't you think that's the writing, though?

KURTZMAN: It's a style.

EISNER: I think what has happened is a pure example of an art form feeding off another art form and etcetera. It kind of bounces back and forth. I've always held that in the beginning, there were comics, on walls of caves [*chuckles*], and *then* came the movies. Movies simply restored the action between a series of frozen or selected images. I'm simplifying, I realize that, but the young movie producers of this era make a great case for comics being a source of influence, specifically, the comic books. It's their ambiance, the style and depiction that the movies appropriate. It isn't necessarily the stories, it's the concepts, it's the look of it, the lighting and the devices we developed to tell stories. Jack, your stuff has "movie value." Don't you agree, Harvey?

KURTZMAN: Jack is a good actor, with a great sense of humor, and that went a long way in creating the style you're talking about. A creative personality did these ghost stories.

DAVIS: Anybody that's going to try and have somebody else see your work and have them relate to it has got to be, like you say, as actor to feel it. I've never acted, and I've never been in a play...

EISNER: I agree. In my case, the only acting I've ever done was back in high school. **Milton Caniff** has a thespian streak; it shows in his work. If you're able to act it out inside, you have the base for good storytelling.

DAVIS: Well, we're all sort of storytellers, whether you write it up, draw it, or what.

KURTZMAN: The good ones are storytellers. A lot of the people who enter the comics business are, well, let me call them...

DAVIS: Well, imitating then becomes very hard...

EISNER: There's two levels in the comics field. There's the level which the syndicates feed on, where you develop a series of static images and you repeat them over and over, within a series of balloons. It's the dialogue which really does it. Then there's the lively, visual artists, as I like to call them, whose visuals and imagery makes the humor. It's the manner in which the character delivers the balloon line that makes the difference. You can take the same set of balloons and have two artists working on them, and one will deliver something that will really sing and go, and the other will deliver something that's just pedestrian.

KURTZMAN: We have our own category. It's not as if we could have opted to be actors and gone on the stage. I couldn't, certainly. But in my head I can act.

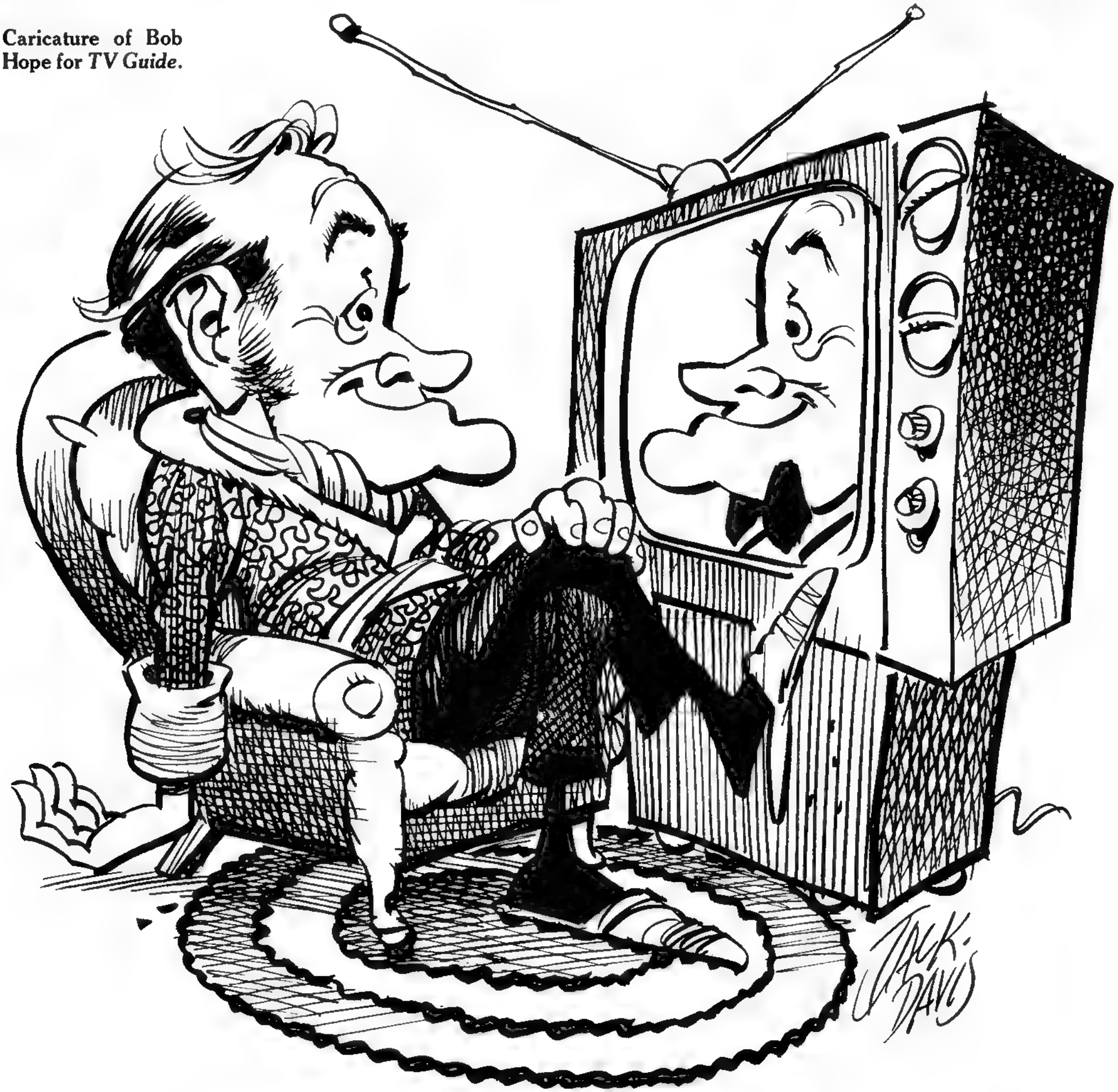
EISNER: We are actors who haven't got the courage to get up on the stage and do it [*laughter*].

DAVIS: We don't want to.

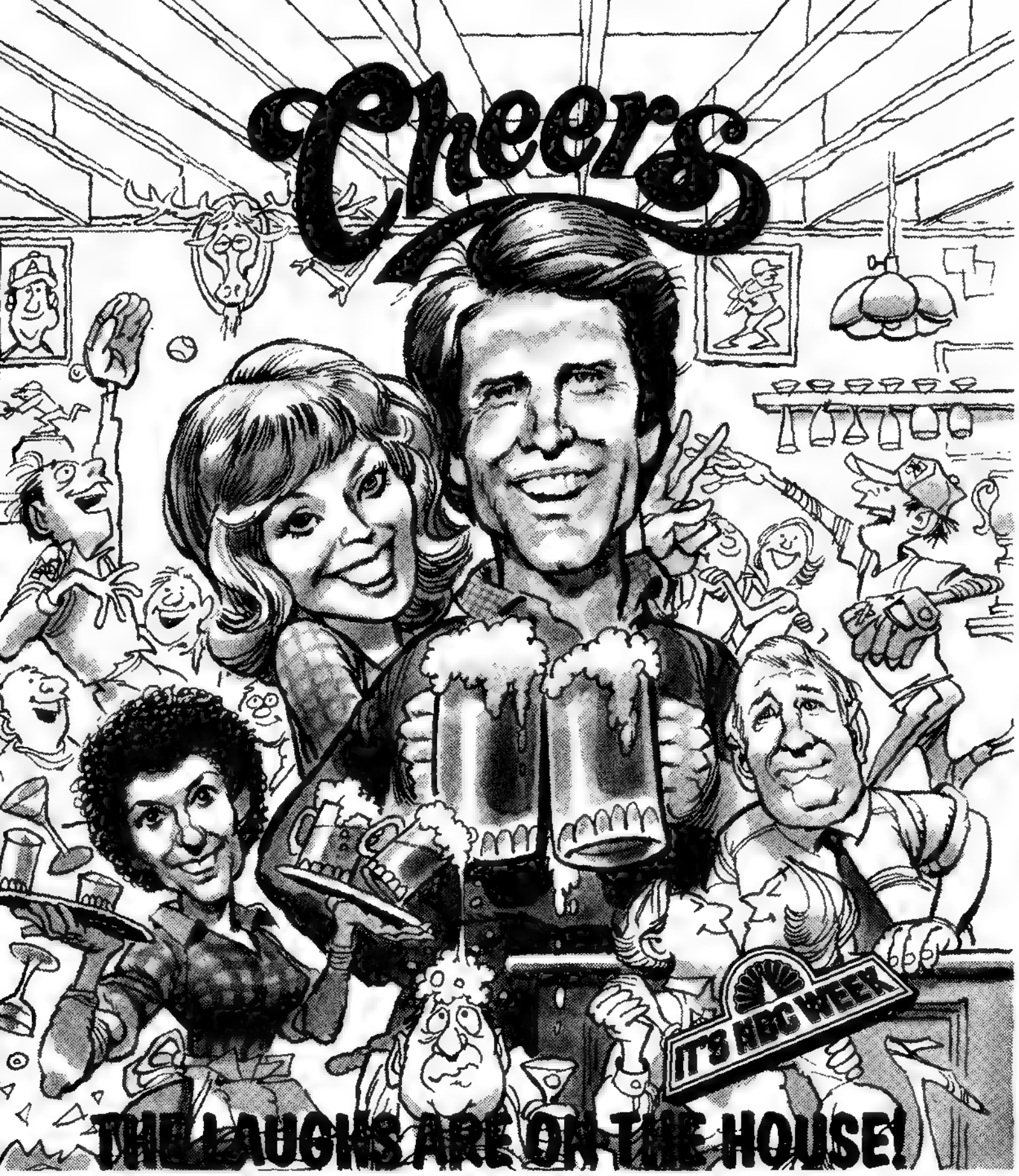
KURTZMAN: A good actor is a physical being as well as a mental being.

EISNER: But you have to act. I know I do, and I'm sure all three of us here do. When I'm working on something very emotional...for instance, in *A Contract With God,* when I have this fellow

Caricature of Bob Hope for *TV Guide*.



Art for *TV Guide*: Who are these television stars?



talking to God, I had to feel it. I sat there at the board and acted it out in my head, with genuine feeling. I played the role internally.

KURTZMAN: That's a very important fact about Jack. He's an actor down inside.

DAVIS: If you want to communicate, in whatever you do, you've got to be an actor.

EISNER: Well, let me ask you about something related to this. It's something that's been happening to me in the last few years—I find that I'm spending a lot more time now on working on composition and gestures than I've ever done before. In the days of *The Spirit*, the gestures of the principal actors came very easily to me. Now I spent a lot of time being unsatisfied with the gesture, the subtle but telling gesture. The cock of the head, the turn of the hand, has become so very important to me that I hone it until I've got it right. I find myself working more slowly because of that. Do you spend time, consciously, on the gestures? How *do* you work it out?

DAVIS: Well, all of a sudden, because of this new machine I've got, the telecopier, you have to work on very fine paper so you can fold it around the spindle. So I've been working on this vellum, which is transparent, and it's a great thing with a brush. I'll do all my roughs on it, I'll do a quick pencil sketch, very loose, very rough. You have to feel what you're doing. Again, I work very fast, I think like the animators at **Walt Disney**, and like Harvey. I then whip it out with a brush. That's some of my best work. When they okay it, I take the vellum and put it on my illustration board. I use an H pencil and I rough pretty much of what I've done in that loose style. I copy it. I lift up the vellum and put the pencil underneath it and do the lines. That's when I tighten it up. I have found that I get a looseness and a freedom. It used to be that I'd get the illustration board in front of me, make a rough sketch on the illustration board, not be pleased with it, erase it and tighten it. But with this system, I just go real fast. I think it just lends itself to the paper.

EISNER: Working on vellum is very rewarding. It has a tooth to it. The book I mentioned, *A Contract With God*, was done entirely on vellum. What I did there was just the opposite of what you did. I pencilled the entire book with a soft pencil, then laid the vellum on top of it when it was finally okay, and I inked it on that. But the book was all black and white line.

DAVIS: More than half of my work now is in full color, and I have to do that on illustration board.

EISNER: You use a brush too, don't you?

DAVIS: Yes, a number three brush, and when I get into big areas I use a number seven. If I have a large area of skin to cover, I go over it with one big wash, then come back with a smaller brush for detail.

EISNER: A lot of your work has a character that I like, which is why I said earlier I felt a kind of empathy with your work. I've been doing a lot of color lately, and I know Harvey has been very into color. A lot of students tell me about the lessons you [Kurtzman] have given them. They're very strong on it. But I seem to be trapped in a vise that consists of making a pen or brush outline, and then coloring it. Even the line is supportive.

DAVIS: I do this because it's faster. If I were to sit down without doing that, I would have to start doodling and things like that. Harvey, with *Annie Fanny*, you don't go into lines, and everything he does...

EISNER: What **Will Elder** does, really, is a painting.

DAVIS: I wouldn't have time to do that.

EISNER: Aside from speed, I do it because of the line's character, which I depend on for movement. I notice that very often in European comics, in fact in a lot of color American comics, the colors seem to drown the linework. It almost obliterates it because the colors are so brilliant. A lot of the movement, like the piece you've shown us here, gets lost. There's a lot of rhythm, movement and gesture that gets obscurred by 'loud' color.

DAVIS: I think your printers and engravers are so important now, because they can either ruin something or they can make it look better than the original.

EISNER: Most of them are working on a scanner now; you no longer have dot etchers in an engraving shop.

DAVIS: I've gotten some of my originals back, and they've peeled off some of the illustrations so they could put them on the scanner.

EISNER: Yes, that's what they do...wrap the art around the "scanning" drum. It's all color scanning now. But this is an interesting method you have here. This is faster for you than putting a carbon on the back and tracing it off.

DAVIS: Yes, and again I like to keep these, and putting a carbon on them might diminish them. I work on a Strathmore illustration board, kind of like Harvey did with *Annie Fanny*, but I find that it's not as good as it used to be. I've also found that the inks are not as good as they used to be.

EISNER: I've been having trouble, and I've tried Pelikan...and Higgins Black Magic.

DAVIS: Before I start anything now, I test my ink, because one time I did one in a sepia, with line and beautiful shading. I started putting color over it and it just washed the ink right off. I've been using a thick ink, and I find that I have to keep adding water to it and keep it filled right to the top of the bottle, because it will get muddy.

EISNER: Once, years ago in my shop, we were doing *P*S* magazine, and I discovered in the back of my studio...there, on a little electric heater, was a pot filled with India ink. It was simmering hot, and I wondered what the heck my staff was up to. Well, they took the ink as it came commercially and boiled out as much of the water as they could, and then they put the stuff back into bottles, and added a little ammonia, so they could get the right consistency. The regular ink they used to buy in large bottles was too thin. I find that now that I've been doing my own lettering, I have to *thin* the ink. For lettering I've been using a foun-

tain pen that holds a great deal of ink...but I use a thicker mixture for the brush on the art.

DAVIS: If I want to use a pen, I use these nib pens, and I use an ink that stays on a little looser. If I use a certain type of ink, I'll have to wash my brushes every hour...

EISNER: I do that too. I wash my brushes frequently. I've got Windsor-Newton brushes I've had now for 15 years that I still use. They've lost some of that fine point, and about once a month I'll wash it out with soap. You can't wash it too often with soap...

KURTZMAN: I thought India ink burned off the hairs...

EISNER: No, it's the texture of the paper that will wear the hair ends. If you look at a hair through a microscope or magnifying glass, you'll see that the hair has small tangles, like a feather.

KURTZMAN: Split ends...

EISNER: What splits is the individual hairs because of the caking of the ink in the heel of the brush. The only solution is to do what Jack and I do. I wash my brushes, I wash my pens, too.

DAVIS: When I get through washing it, I put a little spit on it to hold it together overnight.

KURTZMAN: Once we were doing *Little Annie Fanny* in the Algonquin Hotel. **Willie Elder** and **Al Jaffee**—I don't know if Jack was there—and myself and **Arnold Roth** were there. Willie went down in the elevator and he said, "I like to treat my brushes like little nurses." We walked down the block about halfway and then we said, *"Little nurses?"* [*General laughter*] But that's what he was trying to express...

EISNER: I treat my tools like a dentist does his. They are alongside me, and I care for them. I'm constantly scraping the heel of my pen...

DAVIS: If you see my studio, I'm not neat. I've got brushes and things, and about once a week, I'll go in and straighten everything up and start over again.

EISNER: Let's talk a little bit more about your thinking on yourself and the field. It's been a changing field, as you've seen. Many of us who started in this field years ago regarded it as kind of a subculture, and it's now growing very rapidly. Now you've got some of the books being sold in regular trade bookstores with some phenomenally good work inside. You can see the impact of the Spanish and French artists who have been turning out some fabulous work...setting new standards of excellence.

DAVIS: Unbelievable, mind-boggling things.

EISNER: Yes, artwork that is worthy of gallery exhibition. Where do you see this thing going?

DAVIS: It's a funny thing. When I left *Mad* and worked with *Humbug*, and the magazines didn't work and everything, I tried to get in the advertising field. I had a lot of friends who were with some agencies. The agencies back then would not take cartooning, but then all of a sudden, they did. I think it was after *Mad*. I was very lucky to be in at the beginning where advertising took on cartoons. And again, I was just very lucky to stay with it. With a representative, any time I have to go somewhere and give a talk, which I don't if I can help it, it's "what do you *do*?" I'm not a comic book artist, I am not an editorial cartoonist. I'm sort of a bastardly artist...

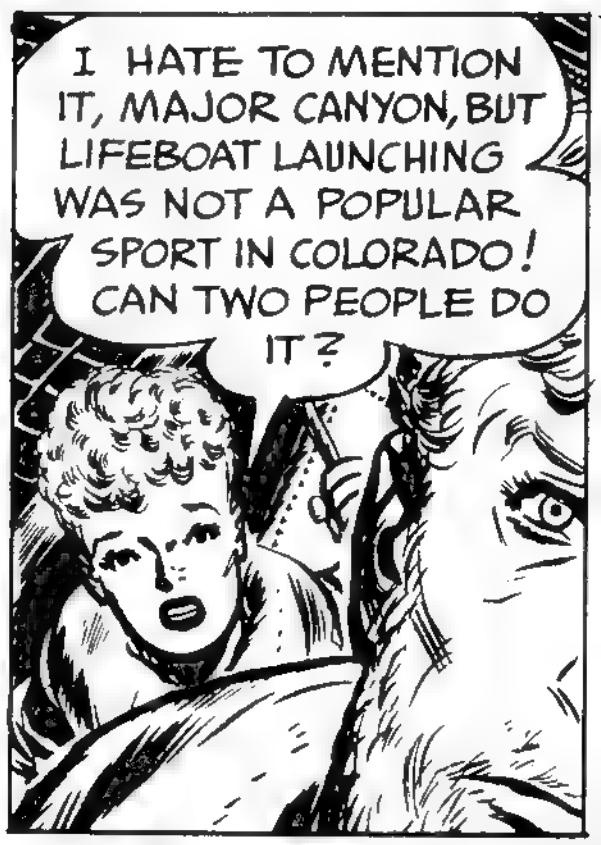
EISNER: You think of yourself as an illustrator, then.

DAVIS: I'm not an illustrator, but I do like painting. It's sort of an individual bit. You've got to be versatile, be able to do a lot of things. But I

Copyright © 1949 Willard Mullen

Willard Mullen's sports cartoons, Bill Mauldin's war cartoons and Milton Caniff's daily strips influenced Davis. All three, and Davis, use heavy black brushwork, conveying a masculine outlook.

7-12
THE BURNING OIL SEEMS TO ON THE STARBOARD SIDE, DUCHESS
IF WE STAY IN THE SHADOWS WE CAN GET TO A LIFEBOAT!
Copyright 1951, Field Enterprises, Inc.



Copyright © 1944 Bill Mauldin

"Do retreatin' blisters hurt as much as advancin' blisters?"

I'M TAKING A CHANCE THAT A SLOWLY SINKING SHIP WILL CAUSE LITTLE SUCTION!.. IF WE WAIT 'TIL THE LAST MINUTE WE MAY BE ABLE TO CUT A BOAT LOOSE WITH AXES!

Copyright © 1950 Milton Caniff and News America Syndicate

am not, I don't think I'll ever go down as, or be recognized as, a cartoonist, or illustrator, or what. I don't know, people still ask me at cocktail parties, "What do you do?", and I say "I draw."

EISNER: I answer that question with, "I write graphic novels." They say, "Oh, you're a writer." And I say, "Well, not entirely. I write and draw pictures." I don't know how else to put it. It's interesting to consider how we categorize ourselves. Harvey, what would you say...How would you categorize Jack?

KURTZMAN: Cartoon illustrator.

EISNER: I guess that would be it, yes. I think of him as an illustrator because I think his art ability, his draftsmanship, it is worthy of being called illustration.

KURTZMAN: I think of him as a cartoon illustrator because all of his stuff is funny and decorative. He's involved heavily in humor. [*Davis leaves room*].

EISNER: Let me ask you while he's out, so we won't embarrass him, who do you think in the field has been influenced by him the most?

KURTZMAN: I'd say **Mort Drucker** for one. [*Davis returns*].

DAVIS: I think he draws some things better than I do [*laughs*].

KURTZMAN: When I see **Mort Drucker** draw the soles of shoes, I say, "That's **Jack Davis,** not **Mort Drucker.**

EISNER: All of Jack's characters have always had flat feet as far as I can see [*chuckles*]. They look as if somebody ran over them with a truck [*general laughter*].

DAVIS: Again, that business with **Walt Disney**, going back to *Mickey Mouse* and so forth.

EISNER: There's a lot of **Willard Mullin** in your stuff. Do you remember him?

DAVIS: Oh, sure, the sports cartoonist.

EISNER: He has a swift, moving line...loose pictures, strong art.

DAVIS: Yes, and I like his dirtiness. There was always a kind of hillbilly country look to his characters...

EISNER: There's a value to that kind of style. The best example I can give you is that in World War II, when we were starting these GI magazines...my work was picked to do a series of posters, which is how I got into GI training material. My work was chosen because it had a "GI look." It had a "masculine" look to it, they said, a little bit of ruggedness. It was the kind of thing that made **Bill Mauldin's** *Willie and Joe* stuff so successful. The same humor...the same gag done by somebody else probably would not have come across.

DAVIS: Yes, and it helped that Mauldin was in there with the other soldiers. He was over there riding in the mud...

KURTZMAN: It's interesting. He's a political cartoonist now and you don't get any of the mud...

DAVIS: ...The blood...

EISNER: Well, one of the problems I have with political cartoons, at least the little I've had to do with them, is I find it very hard to call people names. I find it hard to say "Oh, yeah?" from the balcony. But I think Mauldin is the best example that I could give of someone who was acting out an opinion, or "feeling" what he was doing.

KURTZMAN: Well, he certainly, I think, was one of Jack's influences.

DAVIS: I think so, with the war things, yes. And **Milton Caniff** too. Those heavy blacks, you

know.

EISNER: I guess he influenced a lot of artists.

DAVIS: You're a big influence on a lot of people. **Wally Wood.**

EISNER: I could never draw machinery as well as Wally. Wally was the first guy who could draw the inside of a spaceship, and it looked so damn authentic that you really believed it. He was 25 years ahead of the times.

KURTZMAN: Jack, you've probably advanced the art of feathering by several years. What I remember about Jack is that...

DAVIS: Well, I thought **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**, now they had that great brush stroke in their Westerns, you know.

EISNER: Their lines were flat, strong, swift lines. They didn't go back over it and feather. The technique of feathering to create transparent shadows came from **J.C. Leyendecker.** Do you remember his work?

DAVIS: Yes.

EISNER: I learned from hom how to get transparent shadows. He did all the Arrow shirt ads and the *Collier's* magazines covers. He'd outline the shadows and then stroke lines across it in a kind of grid. I thought that was the greatest way to get transparent shadows. Especially since I used Japanese brushes in those days. Have you ever used Japanese brushes?

DAVIS: I got one one time, and I didn't like it too well.

EISNER: I used it pretty consistently but I found that it was harder to lay in solid blacks with it. It's got long hairs and if you put any pressure on it, it would stay that way. It would not snap back. Not like sable hair brushes. I picked up a brush a couple of months ago, a Kolinsky sable. It comes to a fine point. How about the stuff you're showing me here? It seems that you work with a felt marker here.

DAVIS: Yes, that's done with a magic marker, a sort of a blue-gray. The line work is done with a brush, a Windsor-Newton.

KURTZMAN: I've gone through brushes and brushes. There's a guy downtown who has a storeful of brushes. I go there all the time.

DAVIS: I keep on experimenting.

KURTZMAN: I thought you were on to a good thing, Jack. You were going to the local art store in White Plains and you were having them glue your paper down to backing.

DAVIS: Well, that's if you want a color background, like a nice beige or a light green or blue. You get any color of paper that you want, to the mood of what you're illustrating. Light tans or browns are always good for almost anything, a Western or whatever. It adds a little class to it, instead of a white background. You buy the pastel paper and you have the art store mount it on board. What you can do is come back with your whites and highlight, and it just jumps.

KURTZMAN: Did it ever occur to you, instead of this system, to trace with a thin Strathmore paper over this, just trace it on a light table, then glue the Strathmore onto the board to keep it rigid?

DAVIS: No, I go so fast, that by the time I paste up and all that...My tools are right there and I grab it. This probably took me not quite an hour, just to whip it out and do it. By the time I transfer it, it's just a few minutes.

EISNER: Sounds practical.

DAVIS: Something I'd like to do and I haven't tried yet, is that you can get watercolor paper and

BlackDeckerWORKMATE
JACK DAVIS

Newton Laboratories ad for Vanguard vacuum. The wash drawing is shown actual size.

New York has just become an All American city.
OFF DUTY
IT AIN'T OVER TIL IT'S OVER!
DIG WE MUST
ALL AMERICAN
A quality semiconductor distributor

Davis is the Cecil B. DeMille of crowd scenes in cartoons.

really get art with wild colors and things and then come in and do the details and highlights with a brush...

EISNER: I've been playing around with acrylics lately. I did the cover for the first *Will Eisner's Quarterly* in acrylic. Then I went back over it with a pen on top of the acrylic and it held. I was surprised. I just try to break loose from that outline style. But getting back to the business of expanding and learning...What do you think the new crop—students, I mean—are facing?

DAVIS: Students today, where are they going to go, what are they going to do? You've got to be around for awhile, or you've got to be some kind of genius or very, very good. The schools have been overrun. There are a lot of kids coming out who want to know where to go and what to do.

KURTZMAN: That's the eternal question.

DAVIS; Well, that's the one I had, but when I came to New York, it wasn't as crowded. There wasn't a big field, either, but it goes back to if you're good, really good, you'll always find some kind of work.

KURTZMAN: What I teach in my classes, as a matter of fact, is "Don't look backwards. Don't train yourself to get a job at *Superman*. Look forward to the markets of the future."

EISNER: It seems to be the fashion among the young students, always. They think in terms of the publications that exist now and the current needs that are apparent. But the reality is that by the time they get out into the marketplace, the "needs" have changed. They find new standards and a kind of competition they never had in school.

KURTZMAN: Things are happening now with computer cartoons, computer graphics.

DAVIS: The thing about television right now, with HBO and all, is that they don't have any art, and that's going to be wide open.

EISNER: Over the years I've discovered something that's very reassuring to people like you and to the students that Harvey and I have. That is, the realistic illustrators suffered most by the advance of technology. I'm talking about the fellows who trained themselves to be able to do beautiful realistic renderings of things like bottles and products. The artist with a personality, with style, survived. All the representational photographic illustration has been replaced over the years with photographs. The survivor, it seems to me, is the illustrator who has personality of some kind.

KURTZMAN: That's where we come back to Jack.

EISNER: That's right. I think it accounts for Jack's durability, and for anyone else like him coming along. We're talking here about illustration purely, in the world of printed graphics. Not so much are we talking about comics as a storytelling device in the sequential form. That's confined to the print media. We haven't really discussed opportunities in the television expansion. By the way, I've seen some stuff on video that I think may be yours. There's a bug spray commercial...Silly bugs, looks like your work.

DAVIS: No, that's not mine. My stuff doesn't animate too well. Of course, it depends on your animator. It's hard and you've really got to follow it through to make sure it's right. I've only done one really good commercial, which no one has probably ever seen. It was for Kask Mountain Wine. They would take the initial drawing and do the animation. **Phil Kimmelman** was the animator. The music and the whole thing came across.

EISNER: I got a real fright this year from **Gary Kurtz,** who's making a *Spirit* animated movie. One of the people on his staff sent me some roughs to show me what they were going to do. I got real shook up because it wasn't mine at all. I sent back a whole bunch of model sheets I made for them. Kind of put me back into directing art work...

DAVIS: I don't have time to do that.

EISNER: Why? Is it that you think of yourself confined to being only an illustrator, not a director?

DAVIS: Well, all I can do is just draw. I think you've really got to enjoy what you do personally. I think you've got to work at it and stay with it. I had a lot of faith, religion. And that keeps me going. A lot of times, I'll get up early in the morning on the day of a deadline, and I'll sit down at that board and say a little prayer, really. And then I'm ready to go. It helps. That's how I feel about it.

EISNER: Drawing has been very helpful for me. At times of great distress, I'll get up at night and sit and draw for awhile. Somehow or other, it relieves the pain of anxiety...it's therapeutic. But like you, I think we all love what we're doing.

DAVIS: We've *got* to do it.

EISNER: Yes, we spend a lot of time alone with it and it's almost a requirement that if you're going to do that, you've got to like what your've doing. Where do you see yourself going; you'd like to some day produce books that you have written yourself?

DAVIS: Well, you know, again, as long as your health holds you can produce. I'm 59 now. I've got a *Mad* job that has to be in this next week, and again, that's comic book. And it gets to be work. I could be doing a lot of other stuff. I think if I were younger, I could probably whip it out.

EISNER: I think standards change when you get older. I don't think my hand is any slower now, but I think my standards have changed. I keep pressing myself to do better. Demand more of myself...don't you? It gets harder to stay with the same stuff over and over.

DAVIS: But when you're young, you can put up with monotony. When you get older and you have to do it over and over, I get the idea of hitting a golf ball, or walking around in the yard.

KURTZMAN: I've just got to get this in before you sign off. Jack to me has always been the **Jimmy Stewart** of cartoonists.

EISNER: Why?

DAVIS: "He stutters."[*laughter*]

KURTZMAN: No, personality and talent, and I think you can try to analyze as you will, Jack was just born with a silver pen in his hand.

EISNER: Let's end on that...a very good note.

THE COSMIC CUE-BALL IS BACK IN THIS DIMENSION.

Other than that, everything is under control.

THE SEARCH BEGINS!

In MEGATON MAN No. 7 from KITCHEN SINK PRESS

LETTERS

WILL AND ALFRED

More than 40 years ago, Will Eisner stood at the head of the comics industry, both a pioneer and as a hopeful portent of the art of graphic storytelling. He set a standard of excellence that, if developed with devotion within the industry, could have led to one of the prominent forms of modern expression.

Instead the medium was sacrificed on the altar of expedience and marketing value, betraying Eisner's vision.

Despite its lost prominence, its power still remains. Eisner, like most stubborn, muleheaded, creative geniuses, refuses to capitulate to the current trend of mediocrity, and only in him, and any compatriots who aspire to his ideals, can the comics industry become the giant it was meant to be.

While reading the *Sim*ian dialogue in *WEQ* 4, I was struck by an incredible philosophical similarity between Will Eisner and Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock, too, described his principal purpose as storytelling; he too would scrap pages of dialogue if doing so enhanced the potency of his work.

He, too, meticulously planned and executed tales which not only entertained but brilliantly expressed conceptions, ideals or emotion. Both men entered the mainstream of their respective fields, clearly naturally talented, in the mid- to late-thirties, developing into solid professionals during the forties and continued to mature.

But Hitchcock was known worldwide. His works were anticipated by millions, not thousands. He was revered by all and flew through his last days on the wings of mind-boggling (public) success. How can two men, so technically and logistically similar within their respective media be so exalted and diminished by the same public?

How can comics be regarded as peurile adolescent tripe, when film, in which the whole world revels, espouses the same ends and artistic intentions?

Eisner continues to proclaim the unheard of doctrine of excellence in comics, and as long as anxious little proselytizers like me exist, he will march on.

Thank you, Mr. Eisner.

Larry Hardesty
9718 Fernwood Rd., Bethesda MD 20817

POETRY

Please please stop cluttering the beautiful cover art on the *Quarterly* with copy blurbs. You don't clutter the covers of *The Spirit* or *Steve Canyon* with such blurbs. It really detracts from from Will Eisner's artwork.

Other than this one complaint, *Will Eisner's Quarterly* is the best regularly published comic art magazine available in the United States. As Robert Crumb's beatnik character on the cover of *Arcade* No. 3 said..."This, to me, is sheer poetry!"

Monte Beauchamp
2252 N. Clark, Chicago IL 60614

Monte: We've decided on a compromise. We're now putting small copy blurbs above the logo on the *Quarterly*. This will keep the obfuscation of the art to a minimum.

NOT DISAPPOINTED

I started buying the *Quarterly* out of curiosity. I wanted to see what one of the greatest comic artists would do with new material. Believe me, *A Life Force* has not been disappointing.

Perhaps, as was noted in an earlier issue, the stereotypes and squalor shtick has been overworked...in *literature*. However, in *comics*, little has been overworked but superheroes and juvenile humor.

Michael Clem
308 S. 200 E Ave., Tulsa OK 74108

FAITHFUL READER

I will not be renewing *Will Eisner's Quarterly*, but will continue to purchase each issue at our local direct sales shop. That is Empire Comics. They have done well by me and I wish to throw what business I can their way.

I am writing because I felt if I didn't, you might think I quit. I started collecting in 1933, and I'm a fan forever.

Ed Selznick
16 Kuebler Dr., Rochester NY 14624

STORY DELICIOUS

Though writing this letter may make me late for work (loading trucks for UPS), I am not able to hold my peace. I just finished reading Chapters 7 through 9 of *A Life Force* and must say that I am finding it absolutely delicious! It is quite involving and compelling. It seems to get more interesting with each installment.

Will Eisner is a heck of a storyteller.

Chris DeFazio
55 W. 95th St. New York NY 10021

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11. **I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.** Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: (signed) Denis Kitchen, Publisher.

FREE WANT ADS

EISNER ITEMS FOR SALE/TRADE

ALL WARREN SPIRITS, 1-16; Kitchen Sink Spirits, 17-36; Eisner's Spirit Portfolio with full color plates; Harvey Spirit 1; Panels 1 (issue devoted to Eisner); Snarf 3 (Eisner cover); Comic Media 10 and 11 (Eisner stories); Eisner's "How to Talk to Your Plants" and "Gleeful Guide to Living with Astrology;" Heavy Metal Nov. '83 (Eisner story); Eclipse's John Law, Detective, by Eisner. Bids to Larry Adler, 324 E. 74th St., New York, NY 10021.

SPIRIT BAG 1, in near mint condition, $15. Rob Griffith, 3456 Dixiana Dr., Lexington KY 40502.

WILL TRADE Warren Spirit 4 or Snarf 3 (Eisner/Spirit cover) for Warren Spirit Special or Kitchen Sink Spirit 18. SASE for details to Chris Bors, 121 Texas La, Ithaca NY 14850.

OVER 25 SPIRIT sections and 25 more comics. Free list. Dave Weaver, 17 E. Mellen St, Hampton VA 23663

HARVEY SPIRITS 1 and 2 in mint condition. $25 each postpaid. Michael Harris, 125 13th ave. East, Seattle WA 98102.

EISNER ITEMS WANTED

HARDCOVER "Art of Will Eisner" and original art by Will Eisner. Send prices to Charles Muller, Box 2437, Minneapolis MN 55402; phone: (612) 522-7920.

ORIGINAL SPIRIT artwork by Will Eisner. Mark Sample, 800 N. Las Palmas No. 402, Los Angeles CA 90038.

KITCHEN SPIRIT 17 and 18; Warren Spirit 1, 3, 5, and Special Summer 75. Juan Ignacio Sampere, Calatrava 904, 402e, 08017 Barcelona Spain.

HARDCOVER of "A Contract With God." Signed. Ralph Muccie, 2240 Liberty St., Trenton NJ 08629.

HARDCOVER autographed copy of "A Contract With God," also a hardcover copy of "The Art of Will Eisner"; Warren Spirit magazines 1 through 5 in mint condition. Jeff S. Leader, 835 S. Holyoke, Wichita KS 67218.

HARDCOVER or softcover "A Contract With God." Kent Kawakami, 2225 N. Silver Lake Dr., Los Angeles CA 90039.

KITCHEN SPIRIT 18, Warren Spirits 1 to 16; Spirit dailies (four books); Spirit bags 1-4. Rainier Link, Hebelstr. 12, D-6700 Ludwigshafen, West Germany.

SPIRIT, EISNER QUARTERLY UNDERGO FORMAT SHIFTS

SPIRIT NOW MONTHLY; QUARTERLY WILL BE $1.95

Beginning in **October**, with issue 12, *The Spirit* will be published **monthly** in a black and white format. The new price will be **$1.95**, and four classic **Will Eisner** tales will be reprinted in each issue.

The new format replaces the four-color Baxter comic that sold for $2.95. Kitchen Sink feels the new monthly schedule will facilitate readers in collecting the classic post-war *Spirit* tales and will open doors to readers and collectors not acquainted with the masked crime-fighter.

SPIRIT 12

The stories in issue 12 are: "The Portier Fortune," featuring P'Gell; "Henry the Veteran" (or "The Killer"); "The Van Gaull Diamonds"; and "The Christmas Spirit: A Fable."

Issue 12 continues the consecutive reprinting begun in the first 11 issues. We are making this change because, while we and **Will Eisner** himself felt that our studio-generated color was the best ever seen in comics, the process was expensive and time-consuming. When, because of cost, we had to switch to using only scanned versions of the color, we were not happy with the results. Too often, the colors used originally were garish or out of place, and often were misregistered. It tended to obliterate Eisner's line art. We received many complaints, and combining this with our own misgivings, felt it time to rethink the format of the comic.

Issue 12 will also see the debut of a new column featuring **Will Eisner** talking about the stories appearing in that issue. The format is similar to that used in *Steve Canyon* magazine's "Sidebar," in which **Milton Caniff** talks about his thinking at the time he drew his strip. The interview will be conducted by Kitchen Sink staffer **Dave Schreiner.** He replaces longtime *Spirit* columnist **Cat Yronwode**, who is presently swamped with work at Eclipse, where she is editor in chief.

The reason, it seems, that people buy *The Spirit* is because of its *film noir* mood, for Eisner's line art, and for his storytelling. Color is not an absolute essential to enjoying *The Spirit*.

SPIRIT 13

Spirit No. 13 will be shipping in **November** from Wisconsin.

The stories, from the last week of 1946 and the first three weeks of 1947 are: "A Moment of Destiny," "Baxter's Perfect Crime," "Saree," "The School for Girls,"

Three of the stories have been reprinted once in long out of print volumes, and "Saree" has never been reprinted.

QUARTERLY 7

Beginning with issue No. 7, which will be published in **December,** *Will Eisner's Quarterly* will become a magazine size comic book, containing a 28-30 page **NEW Will Eisner** story. The magazine will be 32 pages and will cost **$1.95.**

Watch for the **NEW** *Will Eisner's Quarterly* for **$1.95** in **December.**

STEVE CANYON 12: A LOOK AT LOYALTY, BETRAYAL...AND VIETNAM, 1951!

Copyright © 1985 Milton Caniff

Steve Canyon No. 12 will be shipping from Wisconsin in **mid-November.** This $4.95 squarebound volume features the chronological reprint of **Milton Caniff's** famous newspaper strip, along with articles and features of relevant interest.

Issue 12 features Steve Canyon in the military. While in French Indo China (later to be known as Vietnam), Canyon and the ever-fascinating Cheetah search for a war profiteer known only for elusiveness and deadliness. Canyon soon comes in contact with one of Milton Caniff's most complex and forbidding villains: Herself Muldoon.

Caniff paints Muldoon as a cross between an SS stormtrooper and Mother Courage. The scenes in which she has Canyon at her mercy are powerfully drawn and written, yet her scenes with her daughter have a sympathetic quality that draw lessons in filial loyalty, devotion, and in the end, betrayal.

Also in this issue: the second part of a retrospective on **Noel Sickles'** *Scorchy Smith* with notes and comments by **Ron Goulart**, and the standing feature "Sidebar," in which **Milton Caniff** himself talks about the story in the issue. The cover is designed and colored by editor **Peter Poplaski**

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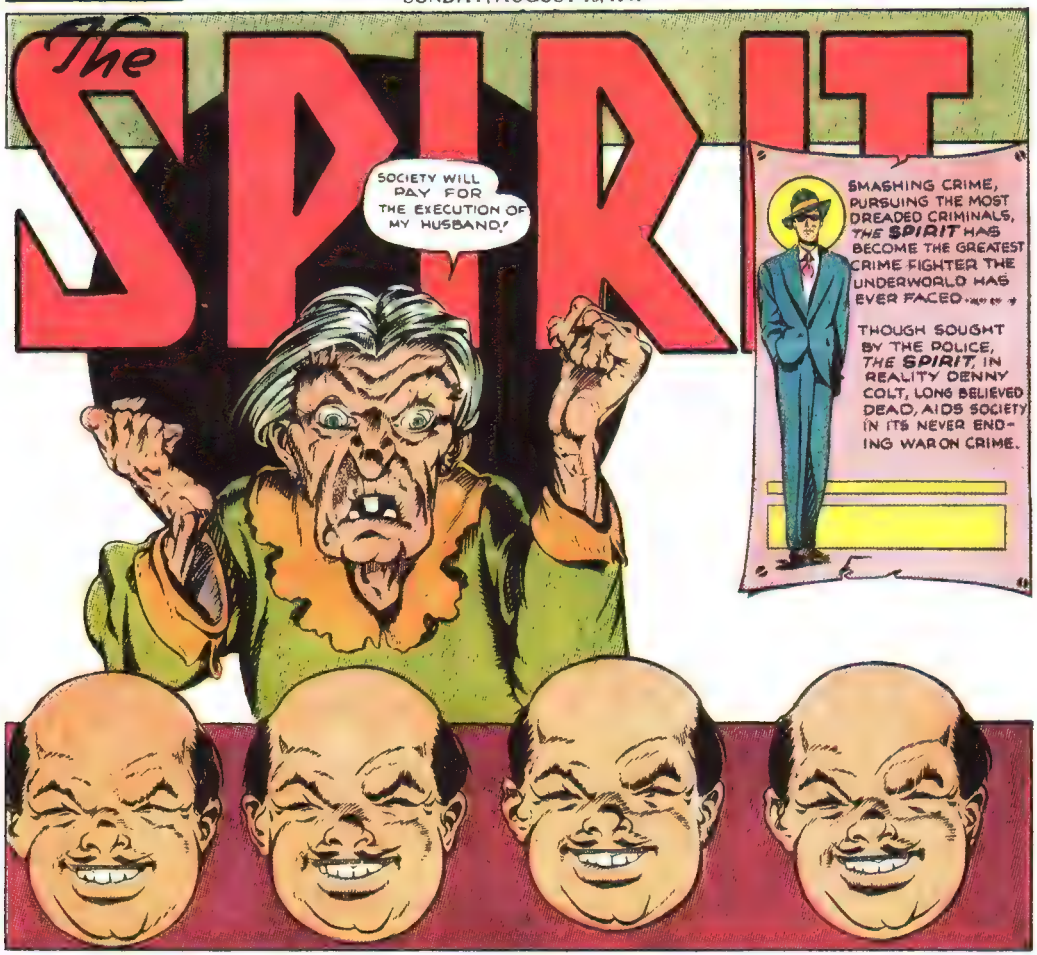
COMIC BOOK SECTION

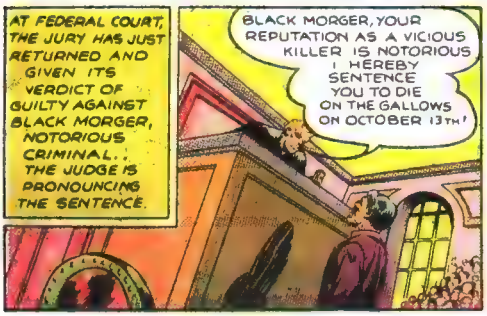
The Detroit News
THE HOME NEWSPAPER

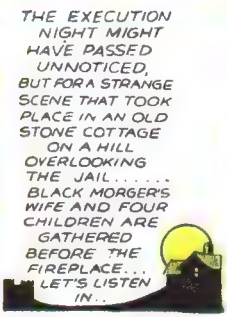
3 COMPLETE STORIES

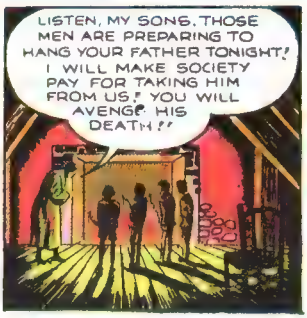
SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1940

The SPIRIT


SOCIETY WILL PAY FOR THE EXECUTION OF MY HUSBAND!
SMASHING CRIME, PURSUING THE MOST DREADED CRIMINALS, THE SPIRIT HAS BECOME THE GREATEST CRIME FIGHTER THE UNDERWORLD HAS EVER FACED.
THOUGH SOUGHT BY THE POLICE, THE SPIRIT, IN REALITY DENNY COLT, LONG BELIEVED DEAD, AIDS SOCIETY IN ITS NEVER ENDING WAR ON CRIME.


AT FEDERAL COURT, THE JURY HAS JUST RETURNED AND GIVEN ITS VERDICT OF GUILTY AGAINST BLACK MORGER, NOTORIOUS CRIMINAL.. THE JUDGE IS PRONOUNCING THE SENTENCE.
BLACK MORGER, YOUR REPUTATION AS A VICIOUS KILLER IS NOTORIOUS! I HEREBY SENTENCE YOU TO DIE ON THE GALLOWS ON OCTOBER 13TH!


THE EXECUTION NIGHT MIGHT HAVE PASSED UNNOTICED, BUT FOR A STRANGE SCENE THAT TOOK PLACE IN AN OLD STONE COTTAGE ON A HILL OVERLOOKING THE JAIL..... BLACK MORGER'S WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN ARE GATHERED BEFORE THE FIREPLACE... LET'S LISTEN IN..


LISTEN, MY SONS. THOSE MEN ARE PREPARING TO HANG YOUR FATHER TONIGHT! I WILL MAKE SOCIETY PAY FOR TAKING HIM FROM US! YOU WILL AVENGE HIS DEATH!!

I SWEAR THAT ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF OCTOBER, TWENTY FIVE YEARS FROM NOW, YOU WILL GATHER IN THIS HOUSE AND KILL THE FOUR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR FATHER'S DEATH!

AS SHE FINISHES, THE BELL IN THE PRISON TOWER TOLLS, ANNOUNCING THAT THE EXECUTION IS COMPLETE. AT THAT MOMENT THE OLD WOMAN STAGGERS AND SINKS INTO A CHAIR.

SHE'S DEAD!

DIED JUST AS THE BELL SOUNDED!

AND BY THE LIGHT OF THE FIRE IN THE HEARTH, EACH BROTHER SIGNS HIS NAME IN HIS OWN BLOOD TO AN OATH OF DEADLY VENGEANCE.

We, the sons of Black Morger, swear to avenge his death and kill those chiefly to blame. Signed

THE YEARS PASS... THE WORLD HAS LONG FORGOTTEN THE NAME OF BLACK MORGER. ON OCTOBER THIRTEENTH, TWENTY FIVE YEARS LATER, IN THE SAME HOUSE,...

THE FOUR BROTHERS MEET.. EACH LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE OTHER.

THEY GATHER BEFORE THE SAME FIRE-PLACE.

WE ARE PLEDGED TO AVENGE OUR FATHER'S DEATH.. I SHALL READ THE NAMES OF OUR VICTIMS.. I HAVE KEPT A RECORD OF THEM!

"MUTTSY" WATSON, THE THUG WHO SQUEALED ON HIM... ABNER CODGER, THE MAN WHO BROUGHT CHARGES AGAINST HIM.. JUDGE WILSON.. THE JUDGE DIED TWO YEARS AGO, SO WE'LL GET HIS DAUGHTER. AND EDSEL WEEKS THE EXECUTIONER!

I HAVE THEIR ADDRESSES.. WE'LL LEAVE AND RETURN WITH THEM! THEY WILL PAY WITH THEIR LIVES!

AS THE MEN LEAVE, EACH GOING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION, A STRANGE THING OCCURS. THE HEAD OF THE OLD WOMAN SEEMS TO LOOM IN THE MIST ABOVE THE HOUSE...

IN THE CITY, AT THE HOME OF ABNER CODGER, SEVERAL HOURS LATER.
A GENTLEMAN TO SEE YOU, SIR!
HMPH SEND HIM IN
WELL?
ABNER CODGER, DO YOU REMEMBER BLACK MORGER? OF COURSE YOU DO .. WELL I'M HIS SON, AND I'M GOING TO AVENGE HIS DEATH!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!! I'LL CALL THE POLICE!
HA HA HA! DON'T BE SILLY! THEY CAN'T ARREST ME. I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING.. YET!
GOOD DAY! I'LL CALL FOR YOU TOMORROW. UNTIL THEN. PLEASANT DREAMS!
I'M DOOMED! THE POLICE CAN'T HELP! HE'LL GET ME SOMEHOW! WAIT! THERE IS ONE MAN WHO CAN SAVE ME!
NEXT DAY THE GREAT CRIME FIGHTER READS AN AD IN THE PAPER.
Classified Personal
The Spirit: if you want to make $100,000, come to the apartment of Abner Codger at once.
HMM.. OBVIOUSLY A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
HOW DO YOU KNOW, MIST' SPIRIT?
BECAUSE, EBONY, ABNER CODGER IS A VERY THRIFTY MAN, AND IF HE IS READY TO GIVE AWAY $100,000, IT MUST BE A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!
LATER..
ABNER CODGER
THE SON OF BLACK MORGER?? I'LL TAKE THE CASE.. YOU CAN GIVE THAT $100,000 TO CHARITY! MY ONLY INTEREST IS TO PREVENT CRIME!
OF COURSE! ANYTHING! ONLY HELP ME!
AT THAT MOMENT, THE DOOR OPENS.
AH.. SO, MR CODGER, YOU ARE PAYING THE SPIRIT $100,000 TO SAVE YOUR LIFE FROM ME! HA HA!
HA HA HA! IT'S A GOOD GAME WE'RE PLAYING, YOU AND I.... .... AND THE PAWN IS POOR FRIGHTENED MR CODGER! HA HA HA!
PUT UP YOUR HANDS, SPIRIT! AS YOU SEE, THIS CANE IS IN REALITY, A KNIFE!

RECKLESSLY, THE SPIRIT STARTS FORWARD.. ANOTHER MAN STEPS INTO THE ROOM.
AH, BROTHER, YOU HAVE RELIEVED A ER DIFFICULT SITUATION.. COME, CODGER!
AND LEAVING THE SPIRIT UNCONSCIOUS ON THE FLOOR, THEY CARRY ABNER CODGER OUT.
HELP!
SILENCE, CODGER! OR WE'LL KILL YOU RIGHT HERE!
THAT NIGHT, A LIGHT GLOWS IN THE TINY STONE COTTAGE.. THE BROTHERS PREPARE TO FULFILL THEIR PLEDGE.
DON'T! DON'T! FOR MERCY'S SAKE!
YOU'RE NOT SO BRAVE WITHOUT YOUR GANG, EH, MUTTSY?
AH, MY DEAR MISS STUART, YOU WILL BE THE FIRST TO DIE!
YOU BEAST!
FOR THAT, MY DEAR, YOU WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF SEEING THE OTHERS MURDERED, BEFORE YOU DIE!
MEANWHILE, BACK AT CODGER'S HOUSE, THE SPIRIT RECOVERS.
I WAS A FOOL TO LET THEM GET ME! MORGER! THE MORGERS HAD AN OLD COTTAGE NEAR THE STATE PRISON! THAT MAY BE THE LEAD! I'VE GOT TO GET THERE FAST!
SOON THE SPIRIT'S AUTOPLANE IS ROARING THROUGH THE NIGHT, RACING AGAINST TIME.. FAR BELOW ON THE HIGHWAY, A CAR SPEEDS IN THE SAME DIRECTION, IN IT ARE COMMISSIONER DOLAN AND INSPECTOR FINNEGAN..
WE'VE ONLY A POOR CLUE TO GO ON EXECUTIONER WEEKS HAS BEEN MISSING TWENTY FOUR HOURS! HE WAS REPORTED ON THIS ROAD WITH A BALD HEADED MAN!

AT THE MORGER HOUSE...
DIE, MUTTSY! IN THE SAME MANNER YOU HAVE KILLED OTHERS!
BANG
AND YOU.. DIE IN THE SAME WAY MY FATHER DID!
... AND NOW, ABNER CODGER, WE'VE DESIGNED A TORTURE DEATH FOR YOU!
STOP! DON'T!
I SECOND THE MOTION!
THE SPIRIT!
QUICK! IN HERE!
THE STEEL DOOR SLIDES, SHUTTING THE SPIRIT OFF FROM THE REST...
NOW, WHILE OUR FRIEND THE SPIRIT IS SHUT OUT, WE'LL CONTINUE!
THEY'RE IN ANOTHER WING OF THE HOUSE.. AND I'M LOCKED OUT!
THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO GET IN!

WITH A ROAR, THE SPIRIT ZOOMS ALOFT IN HIS AUTOPLANE.
CIRCLING OVER THE HOUSE, HE SUDDENLY PRESSES A LEVER AND THE WINGS SLIDE IN...
THAT WOOD ROOF IS ROTTED.. I'M IN LUCK!
NOSING OVER, HE GLIDES TO A DIVE.
HERE I AM AGAIN!
NO YOU DON'T!
HEY! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY..IT'S THE SPIRIT!
OH, DOLAN! COME ON IN AND JOIN THE PARTY!
CIRCLE AROUND, FINNEGAN, AND USE YOUR CLUB!

HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO FIND THIS PLACE?
BANG
BY ACCIDENT. I SAW YOUR AUTO-PLANE CRASHING INTO THE ROOF A MILE AWAY!
THAT'S THAT, I GUESS!
THANKS FOR WRAPPING UP THIS CASE FOR ME, KID..
MR. CODGER, JUDGE WILSON'S DAUGHTER HERE WILL TAKE YOUR DONATION TO THE AMERICAN RED CROSS... $100,000.. OUR BARGAIN!
WELL..ER.. NOW I NEVER SAID I'D GIVE THAT MUCH!
OH.. WELCHING, EH?.. DOLAN, PLACE THIS MAN IN THE CELL WITH THE MORGER BOYS!
NO! NO! VERY WELL, I'LL DO IT!
GOOD! (SIGH).. THIS CASE WOULD HAVE A HAPPY ENDING, BUT FOR THE FACT THAT I LET THEM GET THE DROP ON ME AND FAILED TO ARRIVE IN TIME TO PREVENT THE MURDER OF TWO PEOPLE!!
BUT REMEMBER, SPIRIT, YOU'VE SAVED TWO LIVES IN ONE HOUR! VERY FEW MEN CAN BOAST THAT FOR A LIFETIME.. I THANK YOU!
WELL, WHAT?
WELL?
WELL, EVERY HERO I'VE READ ABOUT, KISSES THE GIRL AFTER HE'S SAVED HER!
THEN WHY SHOULD I BE THE EXCEPTION?
CLEARING HIS AUTOPLANE FROM THE WRECKAGE, THE SPIRIT ONCE AGAIN FLIES OFF INTO THE NIGHT, LEAVING A SOLVED CASE AND A FLUTTERING HEART.
7

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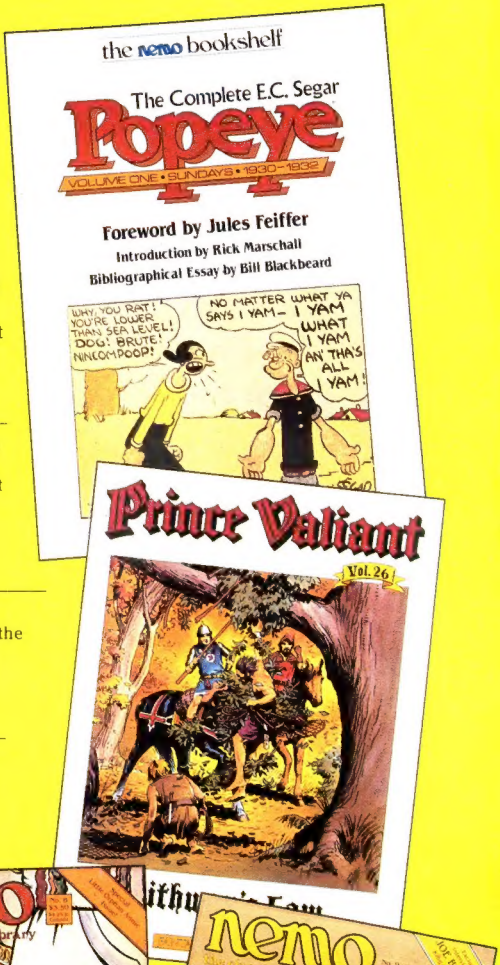
the nemo bookshelf
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Popeye
VOLUME ONE • SUNDAYS • 1930-1932
Foreword by Jules Feiffer
Introduction by Rick Marschall
Bibliographical Essay by Bill Blackbeard
WHY YOU RAT! YOU'RE LOWER THAN SEA LEVEL! DOG! BRUTE! NINCOMPOOP!
NO MATTER WHAT YA SAYS I YAM – I YAM WHAT I YAM AN' THAT'S ALL I YAM!
Prince Valiant
Vol. 26

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A projected eight-volume series, dedicated to reprinting the adventures of the unstoppable sailorman, in a giant 11" x 15" format. Three volumes available, with the fourth slated for this winter! With introductions by Jules Feiffer, Mort Walker, and Dik Browne, and bibliographical data by series editor Richard Marschall and Bill Blackbeard.

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KITCHEN SINK PIPELINE

No.10 • Aug. 1985 • Official Newsletter of Kitchen Sink Press, Inc. • No.2 Swamp Rd. • Princeton WI 54968 • Publishers of Comics & Books Since 1969

DEATH RATTLE REVIVED

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Now an all-color Baxter bi-monthly; features horror and science fiction

Shipping **October 8,** Kitchen Sink Press's long dormant science fiction, adventure, and horror title, *Death Rattle,* has been reincarnated as an all-color Baxter comic.

Volume Two, Number One of *Death Rattle* features a **Richard Corben** cover, an 18-page **Charles Burns** story called "Ill Bred;" a two-page true story from America's frontier, called "Tom Quick," by **Charles Dallas;** and a 10-page science fiction tale by **Rand Holmes** called "Killer Planet."

"Ill Bred" is a story that can only be described as "creepy." If you regard pushy insects with a bit of loathing mixed with fascination, this story is for you! **Charles Burns** has a unique style that mixes realism with humor. He has been seen extensively in *Raw* and in *Heavy Metal* ("El Borbah"). He is easily one of the most popular American artists in Europe.

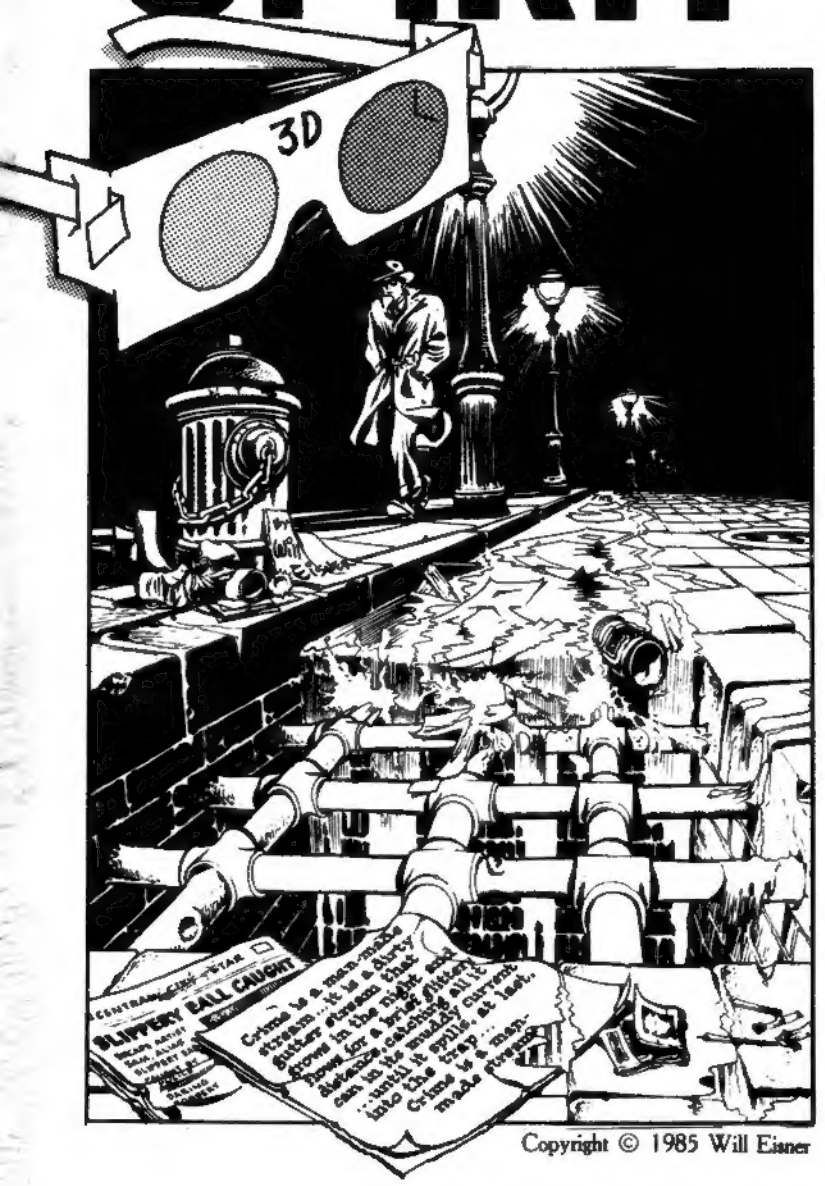
Holmes' "Killer Planet" is an unusual saga about a brave spacecraft crew becoming marooned on a planet where *everything* is alive—from the grass, to the rocks, to the planet itself. And *all* of the living things are *voracious carnivores*.

Dallas' "Tom Quick" is a true story of a man who hated Indians, and who killed them even after his death. This short, punchy piece supplies an important slice of Americana, and it's an exciting story to boot!

Death Rattle is now a bi-monthly title. Stories will be colored by our studio, acknowledged as being the best in the business by top professionals, and by the reading public. The book will cost **$2.00**. Watch for *Death Rattle* on **October 8**. Be sure you have enough on hand of this **Number One** issue.

NOTE: *Death Rattle* will be carrying a "mature readers" label, but the material is not, repeat **not,** "underground material."

SPIRIT IN 3-D!


3D
SLIPPERY BALL CAUGHT
Crime is a man-made stream...it is a slippery stream that flows in the night and glitters in the light and flows for a brief instant in the distance, catching all it can in its muddy current ...until it spills, at last, into the trap... Crime is a man-made stream.

Copyright © 1985 Will Eisner

For the first time, four classic **Will Eisner** *Spirit* tales will be published in 3-D. **Ray Zone,** who created the special effects for the 3-D *Sheena* and *A-V in 3-D,* the Aardvark-Vanaheim book, is in charge.

The 32-page, four story special book will retail for **$2.00** and will ship in **November.** The book's price includes the purchase of special 3-D glasses, and, like the *Sheena* book, will not be attached inside.

The book features an **all-new** Eisner cover. In *The Spirit,* Eisner used cinematically vital effects, with depth of field always a consideration. His dramatically composed splash pages and panels lend themselves well to the 3-D process.

We have selected four stories which would be especially compatible to the process. They are four action stories, and will provide readers with both awe-inspiring visuals and breathtaking action.

The stories are: "River of Crime," "Lilly Lotus," "Blood of the Earth," and "The Vortex."

Expect high orders! Other 3-D comics have more than doubled their regular title sales. Don't be caught short!

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The Masterwork is Back!

Meet...
Frimme Hersh
who
has a contract with
God, only God
has violated the
terms...
Eddie,
the street singer,
who meets a failed
opera soprano one
drunken day...
Scuggs,
the brutal super,
who is seduced into
a mortal struggle...
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who seeks riches
in the country...
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Will Eisner

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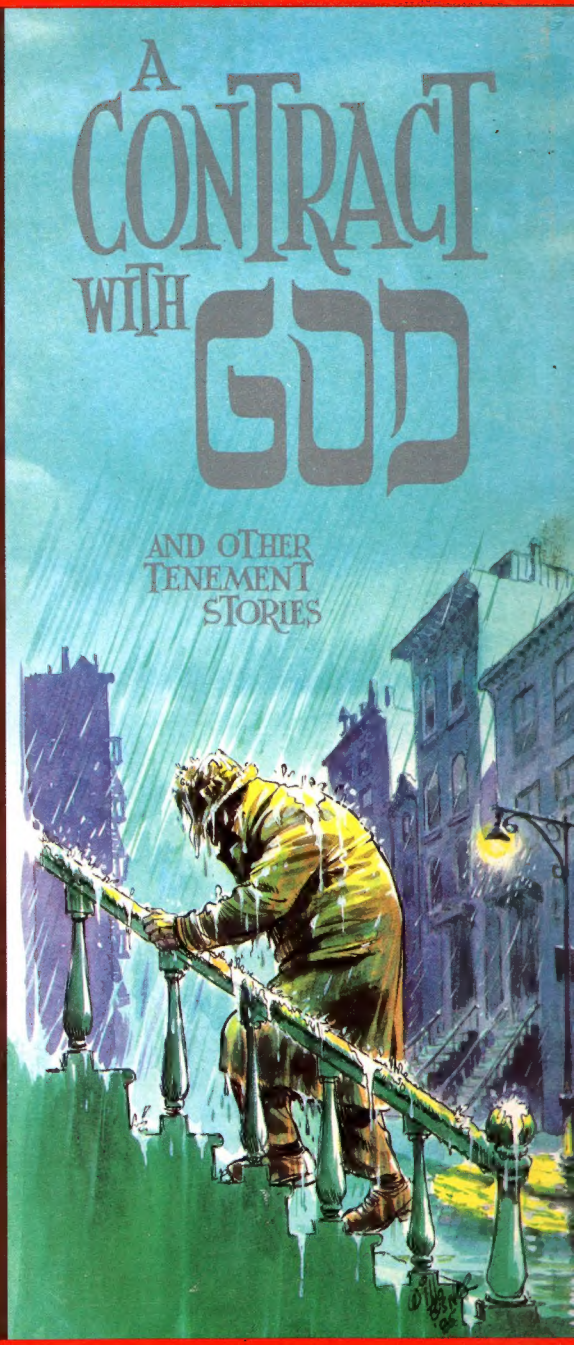

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